

# Simple Instructions on the Holy Eucharist



by Father George Edward Howe

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# **Introductory Notes**

# Preface

It has more than once been suggested to the writer that some development of the notes and headings contained in "The Catechist," on the subject of the Holy Eucharist, would probably be of benefit to the elder children in our schools, if produced in the form of a series of booklets written for their use. There were difficulties, however, in the way, and it was found hardly possible to carry out this idea, however good in itself. But when the suggestion was repeated, the thought gradually took shape that something of the sort might be attempted in book form for the general reader. Then again, one is sometimes asked whether there is a book on the subject of the Holy Eucharist that could be put into the hands of inquiring outsiders, or of recent converts, which, without going into deep research, would yet offer general instruction and information, such as they might naturally desire to have and reasonably expect to find, on so important a matter.

With a view to meeting the wishes of those who have made suggestions and inquiries, these pages have been put together, being developed from the notes taken when instructions were being prepared for delivery in church. Thus, they are but a compilation drawn from a variety of sources at the time when the notes were made, sources in many cases now forgotten; they are but the results of other men's work, as Montaigne says: "I have here only made a nosegay of culled flowers, and have brought nothing of my own but the string that ties them together." So here is another volume on the important subject of the Holy Eucharist. Many, no doubt will hold we have enough works of the kind already. This objection is very old, and one of the ancient Fathers replied to it ages ago: " This advantage we

owe to the multiplicity of books on the same subject: that one falls in the way of one man, and another best suits the level or comprehension of another. Everything that is written does not come into the hands of all, and hence, perhaps, some may meet with my book who have heard nothing of others, which have treated better of the same subject.”

The writer hopes that these plain and *Simple Instructions* may be found acceptable, and suited to the intelligence of our ordinary congregations, who are not always learned or deeply read, yet are devoted to their Religion, of which they are very willing to increase their knowledge. This is within the reach of all by means of reading, and moreover it is the duty of all to retain and increase this knowledge.

The written page is usually more easily understood and remembered than the spoken word, which, though more vivid and attractive, is also often missed and soon forgotten, while again the former can reach a wider circle than the latter.

Saint Peter warned the early Christians to be ready to give an account and a reason for the faith that was in them (1 Peter 3:15); while Saint Paul tells us that our worship of God must be a “reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). This applies with especial force to the deep mystery of the Eucharist in its twofold aspect of Sacrament and Sacrifice, for it is the central act of worship and devotion in the Catholic Church. Tepidity and negligence are the bane of Religion and seem to be increasing at the present day. They result in most cases from a want of instruction, a want of intelligent knowledge; what one does not know, one cannot love and appreciate, *Ignoti nulla cupido*. Some seem to render to God a service that is merely bodily worship; they can be physically present at Mass, but it is not the “reasonable service” Saint Paul asks for.



To help somewhat to dispel this ignorance in those who are willing to learn, these pages are written, that such may come to understand better what they are doing when they assist at the Liturgy, and what they receive when they approach the Holy Table. The more our people can be brought to extend, by any means, their knowledge of the Eucharist, the more firm and practical will their faith become, and the less will they be influenced by the sneers and objections raised against this most Divine Sacrament.

As priests primarily have the responsibility of explaining all Christian doctrine to the Faithful, they too may find this little work of practical utility for their sermons and instructions, inasmuch as it follows pretty well the order of the questions and answers given in the Catechism, on the Sacrament and Sacrifice of the Eucharist.

People nowadays seem so much in a hurry in almost everything, that they will hardly face the reading of a large volume that needs time and effort to master. The present one, therefore, may suit such as these, for it is short and within the grasp of anyone. To read it profitably, it would be well to take only a few pages at a time, and to allow them to simmer in the mind before reading more. Hurried reading, like hurried eating, will not produce good effects. Reading on serious subjects, such as the Holy Eucharist undoubtedly is, requires time and seclusion. A quiet half-hour devoted to this on a Sunday would be most suitable to the sanctity of the day, as well as prove more profitable to the mind, because of the usual calm that prevails on that day.

Thus will the love of God and of Religion be kept alive in the hearts of the Faithful, and prove to be their best friend amid the sorrows of life, as well as their greatest strength when death draws near.

*- Father George Edward Howe  
Tynemouth  
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## **Introduction**

How can human tongue ever undertake to speak in worthy accents of the great and adorable mystery of the most Holy Eucharist! To treat worthily of so sublime a subject, one would require the intelligence of an Angel, the fire of a Seraph, and the pen of an Evangelist, and even so, words would fail to express its unutterable dignity, its boundless charity, its inexhaustible wealth of Divine Grace.

The prophet Isaias, who lived some eight hundred years before Christ, declares how unworthy he felt to go and speak, in God's name, to the chosen people of Israel (Isaiah 6:5). In like manner, two hundred years later, Jeremias called himself a mere child, unfit and unable to speak, and it needed direct encouragement from God Himself, to make him go forth and proclaim the Divine commands (Jeremiah 1:6,7).

Yet the work of these men of God was only to preach penance to the Jews, to warn them of the anger of God, if they did not repent, and to urge upon them the observance of the Law. How simple and easy such work, compared with the duty of explaining to the world the infinite mercy and boundless love of Our Lord, as manifested to us in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament!

Not to Angels and not to Cherubim, but to His Priests, frail human mortals, has Christ entrusted this Divine treasure of the Eucharist; and theirs is the duty and the privilege to diffuse Its light and Its fire, that is, Its knowledge and devotion, through the world. Let this be my plea for essaying so sublime a task, in view too of the reward promised to those who spread the knowledge of Divine Truth: "They that explain me shall have life everlasting" (Ecclus. 24:31).



# Order of the Sacraments

To many it may perhaps at first sight appear somewhat strange that, in the enumeration usually given of the seven Sacraments, Penance should be named after the Holy Eucharist, inasmuch as the Sacrament of Penance is usually received by the Faithful before they approach to receive Holy Communion. Yet there are good reasons for the order in which the Council of Trent names the Sacraments.

*Baptism* confers on the new-born child the supernatural life of grace in this world, to be preserved and followed by the life of glory in the next.

This life of grace is strengthened by *Confirmation*, and thus enabled to withstand more firmly the dangers that may beset it, and to overcome more easily the obstacles it finds in its path, just as the soldier is provided with rounds of ammunition, when he has to face the enemy of his country in war.

Then the *Holy Eucharist* is designed to feed and nourish the supernatural life of the soul, giving it daily the support it needs, just as our bodily life gets constant support from the food we take in our meals. Thus naturally, the Holy Eucharist follows after Baptism and Confirmation.

The Sacrament of *Penance* is, as it were, an episode, foreign to the normal course of the soul's life of grace, being intended, in God's mercy, to remedy the wounds it may receive by the way, through offences against the Law of God, especially through the commission of mortal sin.

The practice of the Church in the early ages was to administer Holy Communion even to Infants, just after their

Baptism, when of course they were quite incapable of receiving the Sacrament of Penance, for they could have no personal sin to remit.

But, though the Holy Eucharist is thus placed third only in order, in the usual enumeration of the Sacraments, It is far and away first in dignity, the most sacred of them all, containing the very Author of all grace and sanctity, Our Divine Lord Himself.

Baptism is the most essential of all the Sacraments, as, without it, the others cannot be received with any effect; it is the one Sacrament that opens the gates of the soul for the reception of the other six; thus, it is the most necessary of all, and always heads the list. But it must yield its place of pride to the Holy Eucharist, when we come to consider the dignity of the various Sacraments.

# Names of the Eucharist

The great Sacrament we are about to study bears various names, by all of which It is known to the Faithful, the following being among the chief ones:

1. *Holy Eucharist* – Its ordinary name, Holy Eucharist, comes from the Greek, and means thanksgiving. When Our Lord, at the Last Supper, instituted this Sacrament of Love, He took the bread and the chalice into His sacred hands, as the Gospels remind us, and, raising His eyes to Heaven, gave thanks to His Father for having bestowed on Him the power of thus giving Himself to men. Moreover, He bestowed upon us this Divine gift, to serve as a Eucharistic sacrifice, through all ages, whereby man might be able to present to God an adequate and perfect thanksgiving for the untold graces and blessings of every kind which we receive from His hands. Thanksgiving is one of the ends for which the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered, as will appear, when that part of our subject comes under notice. Therefore according to the very meaning of the word, Eucharist is a most appropriate name for this Sacrament, which is the true expression of man's gratitude and thanks to God.

2. *Blessed Sacrament* is another name in most frequent use among the Faithful. It is the most holy of all the Sacraments, the source of holiness and of countless blessings to the Church, and to individual souls, who find therein the strength they need to do battle against their spiritual enemies, together with courage to practice the Christian virtues and overcome their evil inclinations. Of It we may justly say, *Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus*, essentially holy and blessed in Itself, and thrice blessed in Its effects upon mankind.

3. *Bread of Heaven* is another familiar name. So Jesus Christ called It: "I am the living bread which came down from Heaven" (John 6:51). It contains the real Body and Blood of Our Lord under the mysterious veils, and day by day He descends upon our altars to be the food of our souls, the spiritual bread of which they must partake, if they wish to preserve their supernatural life. This Bread from Heaven would require the purity of the Angels that we may worthily receive It, and the purer our souls are in so doing, the more do we become as angels in human flesh.

4. *Holy Communion*, meaning the union of the soul with Jesus Christ, is another of Its titles, because when we partake of It, we are united to Our Blessed Lord in a manner so intimate that we become with Him and with the Faithful but one body. The Holy Eucharist becomes thus the bond of union between us.

5. The *Holy Table* – The Blessed Sacrament is a heavenly banquet prepared for the Faithful, and all the Faithful are invited to it, that they may have their fill, and thence carry away the spiritual fortitude and courage necessary to walk in the path of God's commandments.

6. The *Real Presence* – This beautiful and sweetly expressive title refers, not so much to the Holy Eucharist in Sacrifice or in Holy Communion, but to the ever-abiding presence of God made man in the Tabernacle, where He fulfills His promise, "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matthew 28:20); and where He invites the faint and the weary to this trysting place of Divine aid, "Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (Matthew 11:28); and again, "My delights to be with the children of men" (Proverbs 8:31).

7. *Viaticum* is yet another title of this Divine Sacrament. It means food for the journey, and is Holy Communion given to those who are dangerously sick. They need special help on the perilous journey into the next world, a journey on which a whole eternity depends. Hence, the Church desires that all Her children, ere they depart this life, should be fortified with this food of the strong. So great, indeed, is this Her desire, that She then dispenses from the law of fasting, so that, no matter what be the hour of the day or the night, Her faithful children may be enabled to receive this food for their journey, for the strengthening of their souls, before they appear at the judgment seat of God.

# **How the Holy Eucharist differs from other Sacraments**

The Holy Eucharist differs in many ways from the other Sacraments.

1. By reason of Its sublime dignity, enshrining, as It does, the very God made man.
2. By the graces It confers upon those who receive It worthily; for, in Holy Communion, we receive the very Author of grace, the very fountain from which all Graces flow, so that there is no grace whatsoever, that we may ever stand in need of, that may not be obtained by a good and fervent communion.
3. The permanency of this Sacrament is a very remarkable feature that distinguishes It from all the others. For these are Sacraments only at the time of their administration and reception; for instance, Baptism consists in the pouring of water and in pronouncing a set form of words. Once this is done, the Sacrament is given and no longer subsists, though of course its bountiful effects remain. The Holy Eucharist, however, is a Sacrament, not only in the act of reception by any of the Faithful, but even when reserved in the Tabernacle of the Altar, for their visits of love and adoration. This we call the Real Presence, which is permanent, so long as the species of bread remain. The Church, to express and emphasize Her faith in the permanence of the Real Presence, universally requires a lamp to be kept ever burning night and day before the Blessed Sacrament, wherever it is thus reserved. The oil in the Lamp must be oil of olives, unless, with the sanction of the Bishop, another kind be substituted, where oil of olives cannot be had. The continual burning of

this Lamp is meant to typify the hearts of the Faithful, which should, as it were, be ever consumed with flames of love and gratitude, in return for so great a gift as the Real Presence always in our midst. It also serves to take our place, when, during the silent hours of the night, we are unable to be present in Church, to offer our prayer and adoration to our sacramental God, on His throne of the Altar. Too often, alas! it takes our place during the bright hours of the day, when we forget to go and pay homage to our King, and perhaps never so much as remember He is there, so near oftentimes to our very door.

4. A further characteristic of the Holy Eucharist is that, while in the other Sacraments the matter always remains the same, in this one it does not. In Baptism, for instance, the water remains water, before, during and after conferring the Sacrament. So too in Confirmation, the chrism remains chrism, after as well as before the anointing of the person confirmed. In the Holy Eucharist, on the contrary, the bread and wine, which are the matter of this Sacrament, are no longer on the Altar after the consecration, but we have in their stead the Body and Blood of Our Lord, into which they have been changed or transubstantiated. The appearances of the matter, or the species, alone remain, such as the colour, the taste, etc., of the bread and wine. In this respect, the Eucharist is quite unique, and differs altogether from the rest of the Sacraments, entirely excelling them all.



# **All the Sacraments have Reference to the Holy Eucharist**

These four points serve to distinguish very clearly the Holy Eucharist from all the other Sacraments, and make It stand out quite apart, as it were, so much so indeed, that all the other six may be said to have direct reference to It, under one aspect or other.

The great object Our Lord had in view, in condescending to place Himself under the lowly forms of bread and wine, was that He might be able in this way to unite Himself intimately to His creatures, by becoming part of their very being, whenever they approach to receive Him.

*Baptism* – Now, that we may be able to effect this Eucharistic union with Our Lord in Holy Communion, we must first of all be cleansed from original sin, for He cannot enter a soul that is in the possession of His archenemy, the Devil. But the only Sacrament capable of removing original sin from the soul is Baptism, which thus has a most direct relation to the Holy Eucharist, in destroying the one great obstacle to Its worthy reception, and making us capable of the Eucharistic Union.

*Confirmation* makes us more fit and more worthy to receive It, by strengthening Divine grace in our souls, and adorning them with the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

*Penance* enables us to renew this Union, if unfortunately we have broken it by deliberate mortal sin; for, by this Sacrament, sin is forgiven, when repented of, and the soul is thus able to contract the Eucharistic Union afresh.

*Extreme Unction* removes the obstacles to Holy Communion, which may remain in our souls, at the approach of death, when we most need to be united with Our Lord in this Sacrament of His Love, before we appear at the tribunal of His Justice.

*Holy Order* perpetuates the line of the Priesthood, whose privilege and duty it is to consecrate and preserve the Holy Eucharist on earth to the end of time. Were there no priesthood to consecrate the matter of the Sacrament, there could be no Sacrament; thus Order has a most intimate relation to the Holy Eucharist.

*Matrimony* perpetuates the lawful succession of the Faithful to receive Holy Communion, and to effect the Eucharist Union Our Lord so much desires.

Thus in one way or other, all the Sacraments have reference to the Holy Eucharist, the grandest and most exalted of all, the One for which all the others were given.

# Types and Figures of the Eucharist

Not infrequently in the Inspired Writings of old do we find types and foreshadowings of the striking events and sublime mysteries of the Christian Dispensation. The grander the mystery, the nobler the person, the office or the mission, the more frequent and pointed is the ancient type. This is especially true of the Holy Eucharist, the grand mystery of Divine Charity. Quite naturally, we may expect to find, in the ancient Scripture, some objects or events pointing directly, as with a finger of light, towards this sublime mystery, preparing men's minds for the institution of this Divine Sacrament, and lighting up the hidden mysteries after the event. For, all the chief works of Our Lord were typified and prefigured before His coming. Hence the Old Law has been compared to the rose in the bud, and the New Law to the rose in full bloom. It could not then but be that the Holy Eucharist, His masterpiece, should have Its types and figures, to prepare mankind for Its bestowal. Let us now consider some of these.

I. a. The *Tree of Life* is a first figure, spoken of in Genesis 2:9. This Tree was the work of God's Omnipotence, brought forth from the virgin soil of the Garden of Eden. – So was Our Lord's Body the product of the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of His holy Mother, who was a virgin.

b. The specific virtue of this Tree was to sustain and renew the principle of undecaying life, to make man immortal, so that, by eating of the fruit of it, he might live for ever, and, without tasting death, be in due time translated to Heaven. – Far more wonderful and effective than this is the Body of Our Lord in Holy Communion, which gives to our souls their

supernatural food, to our bodies a glorious resurrection, and to both, at the end of time, the unending life of glory.

c. Had our first parents been obedient, God would have given them to eat the fruit of the Tree of Life, of immortality, and they never would have died. – Such, too, is the promised effect of the Holy Eucharist, worthily and frequently received. “He that eateth this bread shall live for ever” (John 6:59).

d. The Tree of Life was seen only in the earthly Paradise. – Only in the true Church of God is the Blessed Sacrament worthily honoured and adored.

2. a. The *Paschal Lamb* (Exodus 12) is another type of this great Sacrament. The Jews were required, by the express command of God, to offer to Him every year the Paschal Lamb, in memory of their marvellous deliverance from the slavery of Egypt.

b. The Lamb was to be sacrificed in the evening, and Our Saviour instituted the Blessed Sacrament the night before He died.

c. It was to be “roasted at the fire,” to remind us how the true Paschal Lamb, Our Lord in this Sacrament, is all consumed with the fire of charity for men, while they, when they approach to receive Him, must do so, their hearts burning with love for God and their neighbour.

d. A distinct prohibition was made that, in sacrificing this Lamb, none of its bones were to be broken. In like manner, Our Divine Redeemer, the true Paschal Lamb of the New Law, had none of His bones broken, while He hung upon the Cross in death, as had the two malefactors who were crucified beside Him, to hasten on their death, before the Great Sabbath came in. – Though a consecrated particle

may sometimes be divided into two or more parts, yet is not Our Lord broken or divided in any way, but exists whole and entire under each and every such part. It is but the appearance, the species of bread that is broken.

“Non confractus, non divisus,  
Integer accipitur.”

– Saint Thomas of Aquin.

“There is no breakage, no dividing,  
Whole He comes to everyone.”

– Galwey, “Watches,” i. 321.

e. The Paschal Lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread, which denotes the purity of mind and body with which we must approach the solemn banquet prepared for us in Holy Communion, while the lettuce, sharp and bitter to the taste, which was eaten with the flesh of the Lamb, is typical of the sorrow for sin and the spirit of mortification, (bitter to flesh and blood and to our natural inclinations), that should constitute our chief preparation for the eating of this spiritual food of our souls. And Our Saviour offered up the unbloody Sacrifice of the Lamb of God, on Holy Thursday evening, at the institution of the Holy Eucharist. These are some points of resemblance to be found between the Paschal Lamb and the Holy Eucharist, which help to show how really the former is a striking figure and type of the latter.

3. The *Manna* (Exodus 16) affords a further type, if possible even more telling than the previous one. After the delivery of the Chosen People from Egypt, and their wonderful passage of the Red Sea, they entered upon the sandy desert that lies on its eastern shore. Here food began to fail them, and Moses, their leader, had recourse to God in the difficulty, Who promised to feed His people with food from

Heaven. The very next morning this promise was fulfilled, for, at an early hour, the neighbourhood of the camp was covered with a sort of dew or hoar frost; this was the manna, which, as we shall now see, was one of the most admirable figures of the Holy Eucharist.

a. Even in appearance the manna resembled the Divine Eucharist, small and white, like hoar frost on the sands, but being in reality something very different. – So the Blessed Sacrament resembles bread, but is in reality the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ. The manna had to be gathered in the early morning, when men were fasting; so too the Holy Communion.

b. The manna was to be the daily food of the body for the Jews, in their wanderings through the wilderness, till they arrived at the Land of Promise. – The Holy Eucharist is the spiritual food of our souls in our exile through life, till at length we reach the true Land of Promise, the Kingdom of Heaven.

c. This food in the desert fell from the clouds each morning, as snow and rain fall upon the earth, and it fell daily, except on the Sabbath. – The Holy Eucharist is Our Blessed Lord, who day by day comes down from Heaven upon our altars at the bidding of His own creatures, the priests of the Church, as they pronounce the words of consecration in the Mass. Referring to this heavenly food, King Solomon exclaims (Wisdom 16:20), *Panem de coelo proestitisti eis*, words so familiar to our ears at Benediction: “Thou gavest them bread from Heaven.” The Church has adopted these words, originally written of the manna, and applies them to the spiritual bread which we receive in Holy Communion.

d. It was to the Jews alone that this manna was given, and that, too, only after they had passed through the waters of

the Red Sea; they had it not in Egypt, nor did other nations ever receive it. – The Holy Eucharist is only for the people of God in the true Church, and for them, only after they have passed through the waters of Baptism, being thereby delivered from the slavery of the Devil, who held their souls in the bondage of original sin; they may not lawfully nor effectively receive it ere this.

e. Furthermore, this wondrous manna had every kind of agreeable taste, as each one who partook of it might desire. “It was turned to what every man liked” (Wisdom 16:21). As it was to be the daily food of the people for forty years, we can well imagine how monotonous, and even nauseous, the one kind of food must become. But the goodness and power of God provided against this, by imparting to it a variety of tastes; thus to one it had today the taste of bread, tomorrow the taste of flesh-meat, while another day it would have the flavour of fruit, and so on, according to the wishes of each one who partook of it. Hence again, King Solomon said: *Omne delectamentum in se habentem*: “having in it all that is delicious.” – Was there ever food like to this? Yes, it is found in Holy Communion, to which the Church applies these further words also; for the Holy Eucharist has the same power of supplying the varying needs of the multitudes that come to receive it. Thus, It strengthens one, brings comfort to another; It enlightens the mind, or inflames the heart. Our soul, desirous of being humble, will soon become so, by worthily eating this Divine food. Another, striving after purity of heart, will soon acquire the virtue, on partaking frequently of this Bread of Angels. As the manna, then, had every taste according to each one’s wish, so has the Holy Eucharist the power of satisfying all the spiritual wants of souls, according to the needs of each.

f. The manna fell only in the desert, and ceased when the Israelites reached the Land of Cana. Among the sands of the



wilderness nothing could grow, so God provided this strange nutriment for them. But, when their needs were met by the fertility of the Promised Land – land flowing with milk and honey – the manna was no longer needed, and then it ceased to fall. Curiously enough, the desert was called the “Desert of Sin” (Exodus 16:1). – Truly is this world of ours a desert, and a desert where sin and its occasions abound, where the weary pilgrim sadly needs a Divine food to brace him for his journey to eternity. As long as we are in this land of exile, it provides little food for the soul, hence the Holy Communion is daily provided for it; but when at length, through God’s grace, we reach the true Land of Promise – our home in Heaven – the Holy Eucharist will no longer be needed as our spiritual food. We shall then see and possess Our Divine Lord as He is, no longer hidden under the sacramental veils, but face to face for all eternity. It is sometimes said, however, that one consecrated particle of the Blessed Sacrament will, at the last day, be carried by Angels’ hands to Heaven, there to be an unceasing joy and delight for the Angels and Saints to love and adore, especially for those souls who loved It much in the days of their earthly pilgrimage. But It will not be then their food, for none other will they there require than the eternal possession of Him whom they loved, adored, and received so often, as exiles on earth. Who can fail to see how true and perfect a type this manna of the Old Law is of the heavenly food given to our souls in the New? Our Lord Himself quoted the manna as a figure of the Blessed Sacrament (John 6:59).

4. Coming now to the New Testament, we find, at the marriage feast of Cana, a further figure of the Holy Eucharist in the miraculous *change of water into wine*. This is an admirable type of the Blessed Sacrament, food being the matter in both instances, and transubstantiation being likewise effected (at least we may presume it took place at Cana). Both type and anti-type are presented to us through

the medium of Our Lady. It was from Her that Jesus received the Divine Flesh which we have in the Holy Eucharist, and it was through Her prayer that water was changed into wine at the marriage feast. The incident is well known, being read to us on the second Sunday after the Epiphany, from the second chapter of S. John's Gospel. The Fathers of the Church see in this display of Divine power a type of the miraculous change of bread and wine into Our Lord's Body and Blood, effected for the first time by Himself at the Last Supper, and, by His command, continued daily on the altars of the Catholic Church throughout the world, every time the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered.

5. One more type we may consider, the *multiplication of the loaves* for the multitudes. This miracle we read, from the sixth chapter of Saint John's Gospel, on the fourth Sunday of Lent; it is likewise related in the fifteenth chapter of Saint Matthew's Gospel. It is figurative of the spiritual food of the Holy Eucharist, inasmuch as it suffices for the souls of all men, no matter where living, and foreshadows the multiplied presence of Our Saviour, in His mystical form, in every portion of the earth.

# **Promise of the Holy Eucharist, and Fulfillment**

It was after working this last miracle that Our Lord took occasion to promise His future gift of the Holy Eucharist, and to unfold the doctrine of the Real Presence to the wondering multitudes that followed Him.

He, on the day following the miracle, was found by the Jews, from whom He had fled, because they intended to proclaim Him king in the synagogue at Capharnaum. This was the place, this the occasion, memorable for all time as witness of the solemn promulgation of the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament. In words chosen for their very simplicity, force, directness, and absence of ambiguity, He expounded the truth of the Holy Eucharist, even the very form under which men should receive it, as also the Divine effects it should produce, namely: reunion of the soul with Himself: “abideth in Me and I in him”; preservation of the supernatural life of the soul: “shall live for ever”; attainment of the life of glory hereafter: “hath everlasting life”; glorious resurrection of the body: “I will raise him up in the last day.”

One might have thought it impossible for human ingenuity to be able to distort such simple words from their natural and literal meaning. Be it said of the Jews to their credit, they understood Our Lord aright, but refused to believe His doctrine. It would seem as though, like heretics of a later date, they had made up their minds to have none of the Blessed Sacrament, and deliberately set to work to constrain His simple words to mean anything but the Holy Eucharist.

In Saint John’s Gospel, 6:54-59, we read as follows: “I am the living bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat

of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. . . . Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. . . . This is the bread that came down from Heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.” In this discourse, Our Divine Redeemer promises a special kind of food, clearly not bread, for bread is not living; therefore it must be something living, though under the cover or form of bread; and, to make it more clear, He identifies Himself with this food, “I am the living bread.” He, therefore, and the living bread are one. Clearer still and put beyond all doubt is His meaning, when He adds: “My flesh is meat indeed.” This living bread was to surpass even the manna, itself a wonderful food, as we have already seen. Our Lord often repeated that it was His own flesh and blood He intended to give to the world, and it was this literal meaning that His hearers attached to His words. Some of them, indeed, found this promise so hard a saying, that they “walked no more with Him.” Yet Our Lord did not correct the interpretation they put upon His words. Thus we are left to accept them in their simple and literal sense. Here we have the promise of the Real Presence, under the mystic forms of bread and wine, as the food and drink of our souls.

The fulfillment of this promise Our Lord gave in the institution of the Holy Eucharist, on Maundy Thursday, the eve of His death, after eating the Paschal Lamb with the Apostles, according to the ordinance of the Old Law. This institution of the Blessed Sacrament, as recorded by four of the Inspired Writers, will be fully treated, when the word “Sacrament” comes to be explained further on.

The preceding pages may serve as a sort of introduction to the *Simple Instructions* that are to follow. The Eucharist is a great and sublime subject for consideration and study, and

it naturally falls under two headings, which require to be treated separately, viz., as a *Sacrament*, to be received by man, for the sanctification of his soul; and then as a *Sacrifice*, to be offered to God, by which we pay adequate homage to the Divine Majesty.

# **The Holy Eucharist as a Sacrament**

# Nature of a Sacrament

Without entering fully into details as to the nature of a sacrament, it would seem advisable at this point to say some few words on that subject, before treating the Holy Eucharist as one of the Sacraments.

The Penny Catechism tells us a sacrament is an outward sign of inward grace, ordained by Jesus Christ, by which grace is given to our souls. In this definition we find the three essentials of every sacrament, namely:

1. Outward Sign – By this we mean something falling under the cognisance of the senses, giving us a knowledge of something that does not fall upon them. For instance, a *natural* sign would be smoke issuing from the chimney. As we pass down the street and see this with our eyes, we are reminded of the fire within, which we cannot see. Yet we know it is there, for “where, there is smoke, there is fire.” A footprint on the sands is a natural sign, by which we know someone has passed that way, though no living being be visible at the time when we find it. If on passing by a church we hear the strain of the organ, we are satisfied the organist is there, though hidden from view. A *conventional* sign is one that men agree upon, as a means of making known some unknown fact or wish. As an example, certain signboards indicate special trades or classes of business. On the battlefield, the bugle sounds in a definite manner, and the troops know at once what definite movements they must execute.

Now, this Outward Sign, which varies in the different Sacraments, consists of two parts, the matter and the form.



a. The *Matter* is the thing used and the using of it. In Baptism, the matter is water and the pouring of it on the child's head. In Confirmation, it is chrism and the anointing with it. While in the Holy Eucharist, it is the bread and wine, about to be miraculously changed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

b. The *Form* consists of the words uttered in effecting the Sacraments. They give life and energy to the matter; for, the mere pouring of water is only a mechanical act, which has no value or meaning, till words accompany and interpret it. "I baptize thee," etc., are the words that constitute the Form in Baptism. They give vitality and power to the water to effect the cleansing of the soul, as it is poured on the head of the child, with the intention of doing what the Church intends us to do. In the Holy Eucharist, the Form consists of the words of Consecration pronounced over the bread and the wine separately, denoting and effecting the transubstantiation of them both. Thus the outward sign may be described as composite, that is, the *material* element needs a *verbal* complement to constitute the sign in its fullness.

2. Inward Grace is the second essential of every Sacrament, and every Sacrament is a channel of God's grace and help to the souls of those who receive it worthily.

a. *Sanctifying Grace* makes us pleasing to God; it is like a precious garment thrown over the soul to beautify and enrich it; and if we die in this grace, our salvation is secured. All the Sacraments give, or increase, this grace in the soul, and, if this were the only grace we could receive, one Sacrament would suffice to convey it. But Our Lord instituted seven, thus there must be other graces and spiritual helps to be given, and these we describe as -

b. *Sacramental Graces*, peculiar gifts of God's Bounty, according to the end for which each Sacrament is instituted. Thus the Sacramental Grace of Baptism is the cleansing of the soul from original sin, which no other Sacrament can effect, and the bestowing thereby of supernatural life for the first time in the soul. As we shall see ere long, the Sacramental Graces of the Holy Eucharist are very numerous and very precious.

3. Divine Institution, the third essential of all Sacraments. The material thing used in conferring them cannot of itself bestow grace. God alone can give grace, and He alone can fix the means by which it shall be conveyed to the soul. It is of faith that Our Lord has given the matter and the form, in substance at least, of all the Sacraments: the Council of Trent declares this (Sess. VII., De Sacr., Can. i.). His Omnipotence could alone impart to a drop of water the power of blotting out sin from the soul, or give to certain words, pronounced by the priest, efficacy to convert bread and wine into His own most precious Body and Blood. Thus has He acted in regard to the other Sacraments. In the case of the Holy Eucharist, we shall see this fully, in the chapter treating of Its institution at the Last Supper.

We read in history that some of the Roman emperors, on their accession to the throne, used to throw money to the people. It is said that one of them scattered slips of paper, signed by himself, and representing sums more or less considerable, which the State would pay to the bearer on presentation. The people, not realizing the conventional value of these papers, despised them; but some, well advised, gathered up a large number of them, and became rich in a single day. If man can thus give value to what has no value in itself, how much more can God attach wonderful graces to common and simple elements, as Our Lord has done in the Sacraments!

We can never be sufficiently grateful to Almighty God for His marvellous Bounty in bestowing upon us all the graces and helps we require through life, and that, too, by means so simple and so well within the reach of us all, as are the Sacraments of the Catholic Church. They are fountains, whence we may draw at will the spiritual strength we need, to attain to eternal life; perennial springs, whence flow streams of grace to the soul; inventions of Divine Love, for which we should have the highest esteem and appreciation, for there is nothing greater or more excellent in Religion. The more we study them and understand their power and efficacy, the more shall we desire to receive them frequently and with worthy dispositions. This holds especially true of the one we are considering, the most Divine Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (Isaiah 12:3).

# Definition of the Holy Eucharist

From what has been said on the nature of the Sacraments, it is easy to see how the Holy Eucharist is truly one of them, for it contains the three parts essential to every sacrament. It will be sufficient for the present to merely state this, and, as we advance, to point out and develop at some length each of these three essentials as we come to them.

The Holy Eucharist is commonly defined to be the true Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, under the appearances of bread and wine.

1. *Body* – When we speak here of Our Lord’s Body, we mean that physical body, which was born of His Immaculate Mother in Bethlehem, in the most lovable form, the form of a little child, whom she wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the manger of the stable. It was a body constituted of muscle and tissue, flesh and bone, like our own bodies, human in every respect. It is that body that travelled over Palestine, through the lanes of the country and the streets of its towns, seeking the lost sheep of the house of Israel, going about doing good to all, for virtue went forth from it, to heal the sick and the ailing (Luke 6:19). It is that same body that suffered so cruelly for us at the time of the Passion, and was finally put to death on Calvary, amid excruciating sufferings and in deepest ignominy. Three days afterwards it rose gloriously from the tomb, in which it had been laid in death, while a few weeks later it ascended to Heaven in splendour and majesty, and is there one of the beauties that the Blessed contemplate for ever.

This, and no other, is the Body of Christ that we have in the Holy Eucharist, worthy of our humblest adoration, because it is the Body of the God-Man. We must enliven our faith in this

doctrine, and bring home to ourselves the truth of it, so that we may approach to receive Holy Communion with all due love and becoming reverence.

In the fourth Book of Kings 13:21, we read how some friends of a dead man were carrying his body out to burial, when they were surprised by the sudden appearance of a roving band of Moabites, a hostile tribe. In great haste they removed the stone from the tomb of Eliseus, which was near, and laid their dead friend in the sepulchre, in order to be free to escape from the enemy. No sooner had the corpse touched the remains of the Prophet, than the dead man returned to life again and stood upon his feet!

If such a miracle of Divine power was wrought on a dead man, by simple contact with the bones of a prophet, a mere man like ourselves, what wonderful effects may we not expect to find produced in our souls when we come to touch and receive within us, not the body of a mere man, but the Body of Christ, Our Lord, laid on our tongues in Holy Communion? There can be no closer physical contact than this. With what awe, with what reverence should we approach to receive so great a gift, and what confidence should its nearness inspire!

When a poor woman, who had been suffering for twelve years, came full of confidence, touching merely the hem of Our Lord's garment, as He was passing by, she was made whole from that hour (Matthew 9:21). And many other sick and diseased did in like manner, receiving a like mercy (Matthew 14:36). In Holy Communion we touch not His garment, but receive in very truth the Body of Our Lord. What graces, then, may we not hope for, if only we prepare ourselves reverently and carefully to receive it with sentiments of lively faith and confidence. As our daily food gives sustenance and support to our bodily life, so the flesh

of Our Lord in this Sacrament feeds and strengthens the supernatural life of our souls.

2. *Blood* – When Our Saviour instituted the Holy Eucharist, converting the bread into His own sacred Flesh, His body was living, as He is now also in Heaven. Now, a living body must have blood coursing through its veins. When, therefore, we receive the consecrated Host, we receive the living Body of Christ, and necessarily the Precious Blood, for the one is inseparable from the other. This Blood He took from the pure blood of Mary, His Mother, as He was conceived in Her immaculate womb. This same Blood He began to shed shortly after His birth, when on the eighth day He was circumcised, receiving the holy name of Jesus. At the end of His life, He shed it in His Agony in the Garden, when, realizing the malice and evil of sin, and foreseeing the terrible sufferings awaiting Him that night and the following day, He was bowed down, and overwhelmed with anguish and grief; then the last drops of it He shed, as He hung in death on the Cross.

Hell fire, though burning for a whole eternity, cannot, with all its fierce vehemence and activity, consume a single mortal sin; but one drop even of this Precious Blood is able to cancel the sins and crimes of ten thousand worlds, for it is the Blood of the Son of God, and therefore of infinite value before the Father.

Its wonderful power is well typified by the blood of the Paschal Lamb. God Almighty had already punished King Pharaoh for his obstinacy in refusing to allow the Israelites to depart from Egypt. But the various chastisements inflicted on him seemed only to harden his heart the more, and he refused to grant them their liberty. One further punishment God inflicted on Pharaoh and his people, and this was the death of the first-born in every house of the Egyptians. By

the mouth of Moses, God commanded the Hebrews (Exodus 12:7) to take a lamb by their families, and to slay and eat it in their homes, and then with its blood to sprinkle the door posts of their houses. That same night God sent His Angel through the land of Egypt to slay the first-born of every Egyptian family, while he passed over the houses of the Israelites, on the door posts of which he saw the blood of the lamb had been sprinkled. A cry of anguish arose throughout the land next day, for death reigned everywhere. Filled with horror at the death of his own eldest son, and the plaint of woe that everywhere arose, Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and besought them to depart with their people from Egypt. Thus were the Hebrews saved from the common chastisement by the blood of the lamb.

How much more will our souls be preserved from the Devil and sin – as the angel was a type of the Devil, or probably was the Devil – by the Precious Blood of Our Lord in Holy Communion, concealed under the mysterious veils, and by it we were redeemed from the captivity of sin, when Our Lord shed it to the last drop on the Cross.

In Holy Communion, our souls are bathed in this Precious Blood, and the Devil, seeing them thus signed and washed, is less able to harm or injure them, just as the slaying angel was unable to harm the Israelites, when he saw their doors sprinkled with the blood of the Paschal Lamb.

3. *Soul* – Once again, in Holy Communion we receive Our Lord as He is, that is, a living being. Yet a body cannot live, unless it be animated by the soul. It is the departure of the soul from the body that causes the terrible phenomenon we call death. Thereafter the body remains helpless as a mass of clay, soon subject to corruption, which makes us hurry to take it forth to burial, as unfit to remain amongst us. As, then, we receive the living Christ, we receive with His Body



and Blood His Soul likewise. He had a soul like ours, for He was human like ourselves – soul, the most beautiful work of all God's creation, most perfect, and worthy of His Divine Son, for whom it was fashioned.

In the life of Saint Catherine of Siena, we read how God Almighty permitted her to see, in some mysterious manner, the beauty of a soul in the state of grace; and she tells us how the brightness and splendour of the sight dazzled and blinded her, how there was nothing in this world she could think of that could give any idea of what she had seen: neither the soft, sweet light of the morning, nor the dazzling beams of the noonday sun, nor the beautiful colours of rainbow or flower, for that soul surpassed them all, bright with the whiteness of Heaven, such as is not to be found on this earth. If such be the beauty of the soul of a little child, in the grace of God, what must be the heavenly glory and splendour of the Soul of Christ, the Author of all grace, the very sanctity of God Himself!

It is this Soul of Our Lord that suffered the anguish of Gethsemani, oppressed with the weight of the sins of men, and with the thought of the sufferings He had to pass through, in consequence of their heinousness and guilt before God. It was the departure of this Soul from Our Lord's Body on the Cross that constituted His death, as is the case with us all. At that moment his beauteous spirit went down to Limbo, where were detained the souls of countless Saints of the Old Law, who could not as yet enter into possession of their Reward, for the golden gates of Heaven were still closed against them. On its arrival, that place of Rest was lighted up with incomparable splendour, the souls were filled with gladness and joy, joy intensified by the knowledge that now, at long last, the day of their deliverance was at hand, that soon they should pass into the Divine Presence for ever. For some thirty-six hours or so, the

Soul of Our Lord remained in Limbo, and then reunited itself to the lifeless Body still in the tomb, rising together by a glorious resurrection in the early morn of Easter Day.

Now, it is this Soul of Our Lord, so perfect in sanctity, in beauty, and every perfection, that we receive in Holy Communion, its glory being hidden from our eyes by the sacramental veils. Would to God we realised the honour that is done to us, by the visit of such a guest to our hearts! and that we could draw from its presence within us all the graces it is able and ready to bestow! Surely it is true to say that one Holy Communion is enough to make us Saints!

It is this Body and Blood and Soul that constitute the sacred Humanity of Our Lord, humanity like to our own in all things, without sin (Hebrews 4:15). In this human form He was able to show Himself to the eyes of men, to discourse to them, to suffer and die, thereby making reparation to God for the sin that human nature had committed against Him, in the person of our first parents and their descendants.

4. *Divinity* - But Our Lord was not only man, having a human nature like ours, He was also God. The union of the two natures, human and Divine, in the one person of God the Son, was effected in the mystery of the Incarnation, at Nazareth, and is known by the name of Hypostatic Union, that close, intimate, and personal union of the Divinity and Humanity in Our Blessed Lord. He was, therefore, God as well as man, and it was the omnipotent power of the Divinity that He displayed on those occasions during His public career, when people brought to Him such as were sick of any disease, and He healed them by a mere word of His lips.

Before Him, the Incarnate God, the Angels in Heaven are ever prostrate to adore and sing eternally "Holy, holy, holy," to the glory of His name. He whom we receive in this

Sacrament is in very truth a Divine Person, Christ Jesus, Son of the living God, in His twofold nature, who created us, who redeemed us from hell, who, at the end of our lives, will be our impartial Judge, and for all eternity, let us hope, our unending reward. Yet this is truly what we do receive when we approach the Holy Table! Could God Himself bestow more than this – His own infinite Self – to us His sinful creatures? Can we, therefore, ever make a return of gratitude and love worthy of God, worthy of such a gift as we here receive! Yet how much better thanksgiving should we be able to make after receiving this Sacrament of Love, if only we tried to realise more fully who He is that comes to us therein, Our Divine Lord, truly God and truly man.

How thoroughly animated by a deep, lively faith was the pious Count of Hapsburg, of whom the following anecdote is related. He was one day hunting among the mountains, when he saw a priest much embarrassed to cross a stream swollen by the rains. He had to cross it, to carry the Holy Viaticum to a dying person. At once the Count alights from his horse, makes the priest mount him, and himself follows on foot in deep recollection. The priest afterwards wanted to give back the horse to the Count, but the latter answered: “I do not deem myself worthy ever again to remount a horse, which has had the honour of bearing the Lord of lords: it is from Him that I hold in fief all I possess.” And so saying, he left the noble animal at the service of the priest and his church. The report of this edifying event soon spread in the neighbourhood, causing everywhere a pious joy among the people. May it not also teach us a lesson, and remind us how great is the honour Our Lord does us, when He comes into our hearts, leading us to show all reverence and respect to the Blessed Sacrament, so infinitely venerable and sacred to the eyes of a lively faith?

In dealing thus far with the definition of the Holy Eucharist, an important word has been omitted, reserved for our consideration at this point, a word of the utmost importance. It is the word *True*: the true Body and Blood, by which we mean that Our Lord is really and substantially present in the consecrated bread and wine; this the Council of Trent has formally and solemnly declared. It is, therefore, of faith that in Holy Communion we receive the true, real and substantial Body and Blood of Christ, not a mere symbol, or representation or figure of them, but the substantial reality itself. Our Lord did not say, at the Last Supper: "This is a figure of My body, or a reminder to you of My body," but He did say: "This *is* My Body: this is My Blood." Now, if words have any meaning at all, what other conclusion can we come to than the one just stated, that in this mystery we have nothing less than His Sacred Body itself, along with His Precious Blood. This is the plain and obvious meaning of the words He used.

The truth of this has been manifested many times by miracles during the course of the Church's history. The consecrated Host has been known to remain untouched and uninjured, when all around has been absolutely consumed and destroyed by fire; or it has been suspended, and has remained without support in mid-air, in similar circumstances.

A well-attested miracle is recorded by the French writer, Fleury, who tells that, in the year 1290, a poor woman living in Paris, in order to purchase some food, pawned her cloak in a Jew's shop. A few days before Easter, she begged the Jew to lend it to her, that she might be able to go to church and fulfill the Easter precept. "With pleasure," said the Jew; "I shall not even require it back again, if you will bring me a little of the bread you call your God; I wish to see if it be God." The woman agreed, and then went to receive her

Paschal Communion. When it had been given to her, she, without being noticed, managed to conceal the Sacred Host, and took it, according to agreement, to the Jew. He, on receiving it, laid it on a table and cut it with a penknife. At once blood began to flow from it, and his wife became very much alarmed, and made every effort to prevent him from proceeding further in the sacrilegious work, but he would not be restrained. He now forced a nail into the Host, and again it bled. At last he dipped it into boiling water, which immediately appeared red, as it were, with blood. This extraordinary occurrence amazed the Jew, and he at length withdrew in bewilderment. In the meantime, his son said to some boys going to church, that there was no use in going to adore their God, as his father had just killed him. A woman, who was passing by, heard the jest from the boy and entered the house, where she beheld the Sacred Host, which, as soon as she appeared, entered into a small vessel she was carrying in her hand. The woman at once took it to the church and gave it to a priest. The Archbishop of Paris, being informed of what had taken place, had the Jew arrested, who, confessing his crime, received the punishment he deserved. His wife and children became Catholics, and were baptized. In the year 1295 a citizen of Paris built an oratory called the *miraculous chapel*, on the site where had stood the house of sacrilege.

The presence of Jesus Christ, real and substantial, in the Sacred Host is a Divine truth, revealed by Our Lord to His Apostles, and taught by the Church to her children, and enforced on their acceptance, under penalty of eternal loss, as an article of faith, during the nineteen centuries of her existence.

*Appearances* – There yet remains something further to consider, in order to complete the definition of the Holy

Eucharist, viz., to explain the words: appearances of bread and wine.

By appearances we mean such sensible qualities as the shape, colour, taste, and feel of a substance, being sometimes called the accidents or species of the substance. If you take a piece of wax, you find it has a certain consistency, a certain colour and shape. These, however, may vary, though the wax itself remains; for instance, heat it a little, and you can mould it as you please, giving it quite another shape, but you still have the wax; or bleach it, and its colour changes, yet it is wax still. These changes are what we call the accidents or the appearances of the substance, wax. Now in the Holy Eucharist, the substance of the bread and of the wine no longer remains after the Consecration, but only the species or the appearances of them. What to our senses seems bread is now the true and real Body of Christ, and what seems to us wine, truly His Precious Blood. For, as the Council of Trent says (Sess. XIII., c. 3): "It has always been believed in the Church of God that immediately after the Consecration, the true Body of Our Lord, and His true Blood exist under the species of bread and wine, together with His Soul and Divinity," in other words, there is no bread and no wine after the Consecration, but only the species and appearances thereof.

Nevertheless, our senses are not deceived as to these. There was no dove at Our Lord's Baptism, but to the eyes of those present only the appearance or resemblance of a dove. There were no tongues of fire at Pentecost, but only the appearances of such, "parted tongues as it were of fire." So in the Eucharist there is no bread, but only, to our eyes and other senses, the accidents or species of bread.

And why should Our Lord thus conceal Himself from us, and hide under these humble veils?

1. Because no man can see God and live (Exodus 33:20); the dazzling splendour and beauty of Our Lord would blind our eyes, as if they were to gaze unprotected on the bright noonday sun. When Saint John saw, in a vision only, one “like to the Son of man,” like the sun shining in his power, he fell down as one dead (Apocalypse 1:17). What, then, would be our fate, if we saw Our Lord Himself, not in vision only, but in reality, with all the display of His magnificence and glory!

2. That we may not be afraid to approach Him. Such splendour as this would terrify us, and we should fear to go and receive Him, unless He veiled His majesty from our eyes. When Moses had spent forty days and nights with God on Mount Sinai, he at length came down to the plain; but the people, and even Aaron, his own brother, were afraid to come near, because of the brightness of his countenance, after his long converse with God (Exodus 34:30). It is the will of Our Lord that we should go, and go frequently, to receive Him in this Sacrament. Yet how should we dare – frail, sinful creatures as we are – to approach this infinite sanctity and beauty of God, unless He concealed His grandeur and sublimity from our eyes?

3. It is a trial to our faith and belief. If we saw Our Lord here as He is, we should have no such test. Whereas, hidden as He is from our senses, we give proof of our faith and belief, by accepting His word, that under the sacramental veils He is truly and really present. When the Apostle Thomas refused to believe in the Resurrection, unless he could see and touch his Lord, he was faithless and unbelieving. Our Saviour rebuked him for this, and added, “Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed” (John 20:29). By our faith and belief in the Real Presence, in spite of what appearances may say, we acquire merit, and merit here means reward hereafter.

4. Moreover, we are in this reminded that we are but pilgrims on the earth, where we are unfit and unable to see the glory of God. We should, therefore, long and sigh for our true country, God's kingdom of bliss, where we shall see Him face to face as He is, and rejoice in His glory for ever.

*Bread* – As previously stated, bread is part of the matter of the Eucharistic Sacrament, and very appropriately so; for, as bread is the staff of life, the chief food of the body, so the Body of Our Lord, under the form of bread, is the food and support of our souls. Hence, material bread is the appropriate matter of this Sacrament, which is the supernatural Bread that came down from Heaven. Moreover, the form of bread is the simplest and easiest manner of receiving Our Divine Lord. We can hardly conceive any other.

The bread employed in this case is unleavened, that is to say, it consists simply of flour and water, *panis triticeus*, without yeast or fermentation. Such was the bread Our Lord used at the Last Supper, for according to the Old Law, the Jews were forbidden to have any leavened bread in their houses at the time of the Passover festival, and the Evangelists distinctly tell us that Christ instituted the Blessed Sacrament on the first day of the azymes, or unleavened bread, and after eating with the Apostles the Paschal Lamb, at the offering of which any but unleavened bread was unlawful (Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7).

In the Latin Church, unleavened bread may alone be used, as more closely following the example of Our Lord. Some Oriental Churches, however, use leavened bread, though not of the ordinary household kind, but bread made with greater care and attention. Such bread is always valid matter, but in the Western Church unlawful.



The bread used in this Sacrament is termed the Host. It is flat and circular in form, a custom that goes back to the very earliest days of Christianity. In the Greek Church it is sometimes square; and in both cases bears the figure of the Crucifixion, or the letters I.H.S., initials of the words *Jesus Hominum Salvator*, Jesus, Saviour of Men.

*Wine* – Wine is the other part of the matter of this Sacrament, and again most appropriately, for wine is a very invigorating drink for the body, imparting gladness and strength to our natural frame, while the Precious Blood of Jesus, received under the appearance of wine, invigorates the soul, and inebriates it with spiritual delights.

This wine must be the juice of the grape, *vinum de vite*. Any kind of wine may serve, if truly the juice of the grape; for such was the matter used in the cup by Our Lord at the Last Supper. Tradition says He added to it a few drops of water, hence the Church requires us to do the same at the Altar, when preparing for the Consecration. The Council of Trent gives to this mixing of wine and water three symbolical meanings, namely:

1. To honour the water and blood that flowed from the side of Our Lord, when one of the soldiers opened it with a spear, as He hung upon the Cross in death (John 19:34).
2. To represent the union of the Faithful with Christ. Water typifies the Sacrament of Baptism, whereby we are incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church, and wine signifies His Blood in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Hence the water is blessed, as representing the Faithful; the wine is not, which typifies Our Lord.
3. To recall to our minds the two natures, human and Divine, united in the one Person of the Son of God, effected in the

mystery of the Incarnation, and never to be separated for all eternity. The Monophysites, in the fifth century, refused to mix water with the wine, for, as their Greek name implies, they held but one nature in Christ. In their action they were consistent with their doctrine, though so heretical in itself, and always declined to adopt the practice of the Church, which teaches the two-fold nature of Her Founder – practice which dates back even to the time of the Apostles.

These two elements, bread and wine, constitute but one Sacrament. The consecration of one of them without the other would be criminal and sacrilegious, even if valid, and nothing would excuse or justify such an act, not even to give Holy Viaticum to the dying.

As showing the reverence and care that should be used in regard to the matter of this Sacrament, we read of saintly kings and queens, who, despite their many preoccupations and anxieties, yet found time to prepare with their own hands the bread and wine for the Altar. Thus was it with Queen Radagundes, of Thuringia, in the sixth century, Saint Louis, King of France, in the thirteenth, and the martyred Saint Wenceslaus, Duke of Bohemia, in the tenth. This last used to sow the wheat and tend a special vine with every care, that the best flour and grapes might be procured for making the altar bread and wine for the Holy Sacrifice.

Such examples ought to be to us an incentive to show all possible respect to everything connected with this august mystery. Should it ever be our privilege to have anything to do in preparing the matter for it, let it be done with all reverence and care; this especially applies to the choice of the wine, which must always be procured from reliable firms, authorized by the Bishops to provide it, and when procured, be kept with care, so that it may not be diluted, and so possibly be rendered invalid matter for the Sacrament. Our

faith and reverence must make us guard against such a danger.

# Institution of the Holy Eucharist

Divine Institution is another essential part of every Sacrament; after considering the outward sign and the Definition of the Holy Eucharist, we come now to record its Institution by Our Divine Lord.

Two sets of texts in the New Testament bear on this question. First, we have the words of Our Lord spoken at Capharnaum, the promise that He would give us His sacred Flesh and Blood for our spiritual food; these words are found in the sixth chapter of Saint John's Gospel, which have already been dwelt on. Then, we have the fulfillment of the promise, made about a year later, in Jerusalem, as recorded by four of the inspired writers, which we have now to consider.

We find ourselves in the guest room in the city, on that Thursday night before Our Lord died, celebrating with His Apostles the great ordinance of the Old Law, the eating of the Paschal Lamb. He carried out for the last time that religious rite and thus gave it honourable burial, while He inaugurated the New Law, by instituting *its* central act of Divine worship. He was thinking of those countless generations of men in future ages, who could never be witnesses of the Sacrifice of Calvary, and yet would need not only an infallible Church to instruct and guide them in the path to Heaven, but also a perpetual outward form of Sacrifice, whereby to worship their Creator in a worthy manner, and at the same time a spiritual food to preserve the life of grace in their souls. Only thus could men in great numbers attain to salvation. It was, therefore, in view of the future that He said to His Apostles: " With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you" (Luke 22:15). So great

was His yearning for the salvation of souls, to die and bequeath to them this pledge of His love!

Most of the Apostles had witnessed the miracle at the marriage feast of Cana, and also the extraordinary multiplication of the five barley loaves, on the mountain side to the north of the Sea of Galilee. Our Lord's memorable discourse in the Synagogue at Capharnaum, when He promised to give them His Flesh to eat and His Blood to drink, was still fresh in their memories, and though they believed, yet were their minds perplexed as to *how* this miracle should be accomplished. Ever since, have they longed to hear the word of explanation, and behold now the institution is at hand, which shall both fulfill the promise, and set their wondering minds at rest. In simple faith, and with reverent awe, they listened to the Divine words of the institution of the great Sacrament and Sacrifice of the New Law. Like the words of power, uttered at the dawn of time: "Be light made: and light was made" (Genesis 1:3); like the *fiat* of Mary, in Nazareth, when the Word of God became man within her, so now the words of that incarnate Saviour effected what they said, and at the very moment He pronounced them, the Body and Blood of the Son of God became truly, really, and substantially present beneath the outward appearances of the bread and wine, which He had taken from the table, when the Last Supper was ended.

It was His last will and testament Our Lord was declaring to the world before He died, and His solemn words are recorded by four of the sacred writers.

1. Saint Matthew says: "Whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke, and gave to His disciples and said: Take ye and eat, for this is My Body. And taking the chalice, He gave thanks and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this, for this is My Blood of the New Testament, which

shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:26-28).

2. Saint Mark writes: “Whilst they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessing, broke and gave to them, and said: Take ye, this is My Body. And having taken the chalice, giving thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank of it, and He said to them: This is my Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many” (Mark 14:22-24).

3. Saint Luke says: “Taking bread, He gave thanks, and brake and gave to them saying: This is My Body which is given for you: do this for a commemoration of Me. In like manner the chalice also, after He had supped, saying: This is the chalice of the New Testament in my Blood, which shall be shed for you” (Luke 22:19,20).

4. Saint Paul thus addresses the Corinthians: “I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat, this is My Body which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of Me. In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: This chalice is the New Testament in My Blood: this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me” (1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

It would be almost impossible for these holy writers to have chosen words more simple, more clear and explicit, to assure us that Our Lord left His real Flesh and Blood to the world in the Holy Eucharist. Writing for different objects, at different times and places, and to different people, they are unanimous in describing this Institution of the Blessed Sacrament, and they confine themselves to the simple narrative of it, as of a fact that needs no explanation. They

seem thus to condemn beforehand those wild theories that were to be put forward in future ages against the doctrine of the Real Presence.

We, as devout followers of Our Loving Redeemer, and docile children of His Church, will accept His grave words, on such a solemn occasion as the eve of His death, to mean that in the Blessed Sacrament we have Him truly and really present in our midst, and will never cease to offer Him our deepest gratitude for the heavenly gift He has herein bestowed upon us. For such has ever been the teaching of the Fathers and the Church.

# The Abiding Presence

How many and how great are the mercies of God scattered through the life of each one of us! They are like the midnight stars in number and beauty, like the countless flowers that bedeck the fields in a summer's walk! But of these graces there is one that surpasses all the rest in splendour and worth, as the sun excels the stars, namely, the abiding presence of Our Lord in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

This, the richest of all God's graces, the most royal and Divine, is due to the love Our Lord bears to His creatures. One might have thought that in shedding His Blood and laying down His Life for our redemption, He had reached the limits of all generosity, for who could have desired or imagined anything greater? But the mind and heart of Our Saviour could rise to heights of nobler bounty and munificence, and He would not only give us His Blood and His Life, but would also bestow His own very Self upon us. All things are possible to God, and what He wills He is able to accomplish, and thus it is we have the most Holy Eucharist, as His *permanent* gift.

As a Sacrament to be received by the Faithful, it is a spiritual food given to our souls, lest we faint by the way, as the manna was given to the Jews in the desert. But Our Lord's Divine goodness goes further than the simple words of Institution imply, for He meant His presence to be not merely a passing act at the time of Consecration, but a permanent and abiding dwelling amongst His people. Had He given Himself to us to be our food only, this would indeed have been on His part a most royal generosity, but He has exceeded even this, and grants us to enjoy His enduring presence upon our Altars in every Catholic Church, not in



one favoured spot only, but even in the lowliest churches scattered over the face of the globe, thus realizing His word of old: "They shall make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in the midst of them" (Exodus 25:8). And this, too, till the end of time: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world " (Matt, xxviii. 20). This is indeed the completion and perfection of the wondrous gift of the Eucharist, the continual, abiding presence of Our Emmanuel, "God with us."

And what kind of presence is it we have here? It is the physical, corporal presence of Our Lord, as He lived among men, the incarnate Saviour of the world, the same that trod this earth of ours, suffered and died for us, except that He no longer has the capacity to suffer or die, for He is now in His glorified state. It is the same heart that beat with sympathy for suffering humanity, full of love and mercy to sinners, now as then. Moreover it is permanent amongst us, night and day, from January to December, from century to century, Our Lord, God made man, Our Creator and Redeemer: "Jesus Christ, yesterday and today, and the same for ever" (Hebrews 13:8).

What profit does Our Lord derive from this continued presence among us? None whatever. Before time was, God existed, infinitely happy in Himself, before any created thing came into being, and He would continue to be infinitely happy in Himself alone, were all creation to be suddenly swept away and destroyed. His presence on our Altars is simply an unselfish act of love towards man: for us He died once on Calvary, for us He now lives again in the Tabernacle. He can only lose hereby in the honour and dignity due to Him. As the rock in mid-ocean is swept by the angry waves and the boisterous winds, so is Our Lord on the Altar surrounded by the crimes and sins of the world. On the one hand, His own followers too often fail to come and pay their

homage to Him by occasional visits, or perhaps even refuse Him their presence at the Sunday offering of Holy Mass, while, if they do appear before Him, they often treat Him with irreverence and disrespect. On the other hand, the outside world knows Him not, or treats Him only as a fable to be laughed at, and blasphemes His holy Name. All this, and more, He would have spared Himself, had He not in His bounteous charity given us His abiding presence on the Altar. Here He remains, most anxious to benefit His creatures: He labours to gladden and comfort our hearts in their sorrow, to heal the wounds of our souls, to cool the ardour of our passions, to pardon and forgive our sins, to feed and nourish our souls, hear our petitions, and grant our requests. Such is the life of Our Lord in His Sacramental form, all for our benefit, without gain to Himself.

This perpetual Divine Presence confers upon us also many other advantages of a signal kind.

1. It confers honour on us and our Religion. The Angelic Doctor says that what really elevates a man or a nation, imparting honour and dignity to both, is God Himself and the favours He deigns to bestow upon them. All that Our Lord took from our human nature He turns to account for our salvation, inasmuch as the Body and Blood He assumed in the womb of His holy Mother He gave for us in the work of our redemption, and in the Eucharist He gives Himself to us as a perpetual memorial of His Sacrifice on the Cross, honouring us with His abiding presence amongst us. We have no reason to envy our first parents in Eden, nor the curtained Tabernacle in the desert, nor the golden Temple in Jerusalem. For God is near to us everywhere and is accessible to us all. "He hath not done in like manner to every nation" (Psalm 147:20), and His abasement in this Sacrament is our honour and exaltation.

2. His presence is our consolation. Life is truly an exile and a pilgrimage through barren lands, where thorns and thistles abound, where the heat makes every effort a burden, where hurricanes and storms sweep the desert. What a boon to the weary traveller is then the shady tree, how welcome the sheltering rock, how acceptable a willing guide! All this is Our Jesus to each of us, by His perpetual presence with us. He is the rock whence streams of grace flow to our souls, the pillar of cloud sheltering us in the heats of passion, the column of fire enlightening us in the darkness of doubt and trial, our special comforter in the day of sickness and the hour of death. From the Tabernacle, as from a watch-tower, He looks out upon us in our struggles against wind and wave, prompt to console, and give what help we need.

3. It beautifies and enriches the life of the Church. Apart the wondrous grace and influence of the Holy Eucharist, as Sacrament and Sacrifice, there has sprung up in the Church a special worship of the Abiding Presence, which has developed into a variety of forms of devotion. The feast of Corpus Christi is one of these. Saint Juliana, who had great love and zeal for the Blessed Sacrament, was chosen of God to be the instrumental cause of this feast being instituted in the Church. She saw in vision the emblem of the Church, under the form of a bright shining moon, but there seemed to be one spot on its surface whence no light came, and it was revealed to her that this dark spot represented a gap in the cycle of ecclesiastical feasts, the absence of one especially dedicated to the honour of the Holy Eucharist. The result was the introduction of Corpus Christi, by Pope Urban IV, in the thirteenth century. Thereupon there grew up a number of devotions, which enrich the life of the Church, having for object the adoration of Our Lord in His Real Presence on the Altar.

a. The first and most natural of these is the practice of making Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, a beautiful devotion, proof of lively faith. As visits to our friends are a social duty which we must perform, so our faith tells us that, Our Lord residing on the Altar, we must go and visit Him, pay Him our homage of adoration and love, and beg the graces we need in our daily lives. Saint Mary Magdalen of Pazzi made a score of visits every day. Saint Aloysius spent most of his free time before the Altar, while Saint Francis Xavier often took his repose there during the night. All the Saints used to visit the Blessed Sacrament before putting their hands to any great undertaking. Can we not imitate them in this loving practice? A little more love, a little more zeal, and we should be glad to go and visit Our Lord in His solitude, and help to repair the indifference of the world to His Presence. The lone lamp of the sanctuary is too often, even during the day, the only sign of life He sees! This practice of visiting the Blessed Sacrament is a private devotion only.

b. A public devotion is Benediction, which enlivens and sanctifies the evening of day, as the Holy Sacrifice consecrates the morning. It is a service of incense and praise for Our Lord's perpetual presence, when He is raised amid flowers and candles to bless us, as He used to bless the little children brought to Him, and blessed His Apostles before ascending to Heaven. We cannot in a better manner bring to a close a day of care or toil, than by coming to seek this blessing on our lives.

c. The highest point of Catholic ceremonial is reached in the solemn procession of the Blessed Sacrament, whether within the walls of the church only, or out in the open air, among the trees and flowers, with censers swinging, and hymns of gladness rising on the air. This is especially true of the

procession of Corpus Christi, because it is more universal, and usually made with greater pomp and display.

4. It was the faith, the lively faith in the Real Presence that led our Catholic ancestors to raise those noble cathedrals and majestic churches that stud the lands of Christendom, as dwelling-places for the Lord of Heaven, under the sacramental veils of the Eucharist.

What labour and time and money must have been expended on these magnificent fanes by the monks and church builders, in the ancient days of faith. Not for the sparse Catholic populations of those ages, not for the wants of the Faithful were they reared up to the Heavens; no, it was a higher and loftier motive that animated our forefathers herein, a motive of love and zeal for the glory of God; they felt they must do all that human genius could devise, and human power effect, to make the dwelling-place of Jesus as worthy and becoming as could be: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy House, and the place where Thy Glory dwelleth" (Psalm 25:8). Such were the sentiments of King David, in regard to the Tabernacle of old; such more truly were they the animating sentiments of the ages of faith, that understood so well how nothing can be too beautiful and elaborate, nothing too costly and precious for the Palace of the King of Heaven to dwell in upon earth. Hence the countless cathedrals of exquisite beauty in many lands; for instance, Cologne in Germany, Chartres in France, Antwerp in Belgium, Durham, York, and Gloucester in our own country. Nothing can vie with these imposing buildings, whether we consider their massiveness and size, their towering spires, or their wealth of elaborate detail within and without, that took generations of workmen to complete from the designs of master minds, and untold years to build. They were in no hurry with their work in those days, as we are now, even with our churches; they built for God, and

God's glory was secured as much by leisurely though solid effort, as by hurry and haste.

Then see the monastic churches built by the Monks of yore, at a vast cost again of time, money, and labour, for the same object as the cathedrals, namely, for the glory of the Blessed Sacrament, the chanting of the Divine Office, and the worthy celebration of the Holy Mysteries. They, too, were adorned with a profusion of wealth of gold and silver ornaments, till a rapacious king laid sacrilegious hands on their possessions, seized and carried off all that was considered worth taking away, and then when the inmates themselves were driven forth, their monasteries and churches fell into decay, yet still remain, noble and majestic in their ruin, to tell of their beauty and splendour in a former day. What ruins more magnificent, though so desolate, can be found than Fountains Abbey, or Tintern, Tynemouth Priory, or Finchale?

"Time-honoured structures of a distant day,  
Eloquent in ruin, solemn in decay."

These masterpieces of architecture, be they standing yet in all their strength, or laid low in ruins, were distinctly the outcome of lively faith in the Abiding Presence of Our Lord in the Tabernacle, raised to make Him dwelling places on earth, as noble and worthy as man could make them.

5. So, too, in humbler ways, we still endeavour to beautify and adorn our churches and chapels with wealth of flower and candle, richness of embroidered vestment and gilded statue, along with music and harmony, pealing anthem and hymns of praise. The Faithful are invited to contribute of their alms for these objects, whether through Altar Societies, or in other ways, reminded by their faith that nothing can be too rich or too good, nothing too magnificent for Him who

dwells upon our Altars, to receive our homage and loving care.

Thus does the Abiding Presence of Jesus manifest its influence, and prove its connection with the life and faith of the Church, the unseen yet unfailing cause of countless activities, whereby Religion is enabled to flourish and extend its blessings to the very ends of the earth.

From this Divine fact of the perennial presence of Jesus Christ in His Sacrament of love have sprung into being Religious Orders, whose sole purpose is to render perpetual adoration night and day to their hidden Lord. Never is their sacred worship of praise and adoration interrupted, from the year's opening to its end, and never is His Divine Majesty sacramentally enthroned without His faithful watchers at the Altar steps. Thus is the service of adoration and thanksgiving continually poured forth, and thus is reparation made for the sins of the unbeliever, the worldly, the heedless, the forgetful.

As practical conclusions to these considerations, the least we, as individual Catholics, can do is to come from time to time to the foot of the Altar to our sacramental Lord who dwells there, instead of forgetting His presence, and leaving Him for days and weeks together, without approaching to adore Him, or ask a single favour of His Bounty.

When we do appear before Him, let it be with all reverence and recollection. The very Angels fear to whisper in His presence; how much more should we stand in awe, when we enter the house where He dwells.

So far from neglecting the services of the Church, especially Holy Mass, if we do but enliven our faith, we shall be only too pleased to attend as often as we may, bringing others

with us, especially our children and those who may be dependent on us.

Instead of disdaining the Heavenly Banquet prepared for us in this august Sacrament, and excusing ourselves therefrom, like the guests in the Gospel, be it our endeavour to go to the Holy Table frequently, even daily if we can, according to the ancient custom of the Church, now being revived by the present Holy Father.

Finally, let us make what efforts we can to adorn and beautify the house of the Lord, that one especially in which He has chosen to dwell in our own midst, and be willing to give some portion of our substance, our time, or our labour in the service of Him who has given all to us, His own unfailing presence included.

In these ways we may be able to offer some sort of compensation and a return of love to Our Lord for His Abiding Presence amongst us, and prove our appreciation of His condescension and His long-suffering patience.



# Transubstantiation

After treating the subject of the Abiding Presence, another essential dogma of the Catholic Faith naturally presents itself for consideration, and that is Transubstantiation. This rather formidable word began to be used during the controversies on the Eucharist against Berengarius, early in the eleventh century, and is now the term which the Church has employed, from about the twelfth century, to express the manner in which the Abiding Presence of Our Lord is effected. She holds that by the words of Consecration, pronounced in the Mass, the whole substance of the bread and wine are changed into the Body of Jesus Christ, and the whole substance of the wine into His Blood.

Thus, Transubstantiation means the total change of one substance into another. It is a term very much abused and ridiculed, because it is not properly understood. And yet the meaning of the word is not difficult to apprehend, and may be illustrated by a number of examples taken from the pages of Holy Writ.

When Moses and Aaron went into the presence of Pharaoh to demand, in God's name, the release of the Chosen People from Egypt, which the king refused to grant, Aaron took his rod before Pharaoh and his servants, and it was turned into a serpent (Exodus 7:10). This was a real transubstantiation, or change of the substance of a rod into the substance of a serpent.

Similarly, as further proof of their Divine mission to Pharaoh for the same purpose, when the king hardened his heart and refused to let the Israelites go forth, Moses and Aaron struck the waters of the river and they were turned into blood (Exodus 7:20).

At the marriage feast of Cana, Our Saviour truly effected transubstantiation of the water into wine, changing the substance of the former into the substance of the latter (John 2:9).

We ourselves may be considered as living instances of the same; for, day by day, we partake of food of many kinds, and it is by the process of the conversion of these substances into the substance of our being, that we are enabled to grow in health and strength, and persevere in life.

So, too, was it at the Last Supper. When Our Lord for the first time uttered the words of Consecration, He effected this marvellous change in the bread and wine, and then told His Apostles to do in like manner, giving to them and their successors to the end of time the ineffable power of changing these elements into His own Body and Blood. This is what we term Transubstantiation.

Heretics have arisen who maintained that Our Lord's Body was merely united to the bread, as the human nature was united to the Divinity, in the Incarnation; in such a supposition there was no transubstantiation, no change of the substance of the elements, which this term must imply: it was merely consubstantiation, as they named it. Such heretical teaching the Church, of course, has always condemned, and we must heartily accept the decree of the Council of Trent, which says (Sess. XIII. 2): "If anyone shall say that in the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist there remains the substance of bread and of wine, together with the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and shall deny that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the Body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the Blood, the species only of bread and wine remaining - which conversion the Catholic Church most aptly calls Transubstantiation - let him be

anathema.” Here we find this expressive term formally adopted by the Church, to show forth her doctrine and teaching of the real and substantial presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist, without anything else, save only the accidents or appearances of the bread and wine.

If objectors say that the term is unscriptural, never found in the pages of Holy Writ, we may say the same of other terms which nevertheless are familiar to us, as expressions of the faith and belief of the Church. For instance, we do not find in Scripture the specific words Trinity or Incarnation. But if the names be not there, at least the dogmas designated by them are expressly taught in the Written Word, and are to be firmly held by us. Thus is it also with the word Transubstantiation, which the Council declares most aptly conveys the Church’s teaching in regard to the Real Presence, the most fitting term by which that Presence can be verbally expressed.

Of the bread and wine the species alone remain after the Consecration; should these species become corrupt, or in any way suffer material change, then the Body and Blood of Our Lord are no longer present beneath them; for, it was only bread and wine that He consecrated – under their species alone, therefore, does He remain; as soon as these cease to be the accidents of bread and wine, there ceases to be present under them the substance of Our Lord’s Body and Blood. Hence the law of the Church, that the particles be frequently renewed on the Altar, so that there may be no danger of the corruption of the species, or of any other dishonour being- offered, through the dampness of the climate, or of a particular tabernacle, where sacred particles are reserved.

Transubstantiation thus contains three distinct points of faith, namely:

1. After the Consecration, the substance of bread and wine is no longer on the Altar, but absolutely ceases to be, though their appearances or accidents remain.

2. Another substance begins to be and replaces the former one, namely the substance of Our Lord's Body and Blood, under those same species or appearances.

3. This is effected by the conversion of the whole substance of the bread and wine into the substance of Our Lord's real Body and Blood. These three truths we must accept and hold against all men.

Objections to the mystery of Transubstantiation are sometimes raised, and one of them in the minds of non-Catholics religiously inclined, is this: while they don't deny the possibility of it (for they fully admit that to God all things are possible), they ask: *Would* God do such a thing? *Would* Our Lord so lower His Majesty and Sanctity, as to place Himself in the Holy Eucharist, thereby exposing Himself to insults and indignities of every kind at the hands of evil men? Can we imagine Him allowing such familiarity and freedom of intercourse as must exist, when the Faithful are allowed and even urged to receive Him so frequently, when they bear Him about in procession, and expose Him to public view in Benediction, and so forth? To answer this objection, which really distresses the minds of some, it is enough to remember what Our Lord actually submitted to at the time of His Passion. Therein He was mocked and reviled in His bodily form, He was ill-treated and dragged about from court to court, scourged and spit upon, being finally condemned to an ignominious death on the Cross. All this and more He exposed Himself to, by becoming man in the Incarnation. His yearning love for us led Him to submit to such outrages, while living on the earth. Will His love for us be less in the Memorial of His Passion, which He leaves in

our midst by Transubstantiation in the Holy Eucharist? It cannot be: once realize the mystery of the Incarnation, and the rest will follow. In assuming our human nature, Our Lord was willing to submit to outrage and abuse by those very creatures whom He came to redeem, and He would not shrink from the insults and blasphemies which His infinite knowledge foresaw would be heaped upon Him in His Sacrament of love, during all future ages. Though fearful to contemplate, it is only too true to say that the history of Our Lord's Eucharistic existence is one that has been stained by sacrileges of every kind. Thus has God not only the power, but also the will, to change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of His Divine Son, the change being known in Catholic Theology by the apt and fitting name of Transubstantiation.

This omnipotent power of God is exercised daily by His priests, acting as His visible ministers at the Altar, as the unworthy instruments of His choice, offering the sacrifice in His name and by His authority.

Catholics have no need to be reminded that they cannot fathom the depths of this heavenly mystery. Their duty is to humble themselves before the revelation God has given them of it, adore the great gift herein bestowed, and make what reparation they can for the insults that are daily offered to It. Saint Thomas of Aquin, the poet of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, says;

"Thee prostrate I adore, the Deity that lies  
Beneath those humble veils, concealed from human eyes;  
My heart doth wholly yield, subjected to Thy sway,  
For, contemplating Thee, it wholly faints away."

Let us make these sentiments our own; they will be a real act of faith in the deep mystery of Transubstantiation.

# The Consecration

Though we are not dealing as yet with the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrifice, of which the Consecration is the essence, still Consecration comes partially under notice here, as denoting the time when the Real Presence of Our Lord is brought upon our altars, and Transubstantiation is effected. It is the words of Consecration used by Our Lord at the institution of the Holy Eucharist, and now pronounced by the priest in the Mass, that accomplish the Divine mystery of the change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

These words constitute what we have already described as the form of the Sacrament, and are two-fold, relating to the bread and wine respectively. They are pronounced secretly but distinctly by the priest in the Mass, in virtue of the commission given to the Apostles and their successors: "Do this for a commemoration of Me" (Luke 22:19).

Over the bread the priest utters the words: "This is My Body," and immediately kneels to adore the Lord God of Heaven in his hands, come down upon the Altar through the power of those words. Over the wine he says: "This is My Blood," and in like manner again he genuflects to adore the Precious Blood in the chalice, replacing the wine that was there before, but there no longer, though the appearances thereof remain.

The words of Consecration are the most solemn that it is given to man to utter; they are of Divine omnipotence, since they work daily such miraculous effects, and bring down the very Angels from Heaven to adore their Lord present upon the Altar. At the moment of Consecration, every head is bowed, and silence reigns throughout, while feelings of

reverence and awe fill the hearts of all present towards the august Victim before them.

We must always endeavour to be most recollected and devout during these few moments, so solemn and awe-inspiring, that not a few non-Catholics, who have been present at the time, have averred how deeply struck they have been with the sacredness of the moment and the impressive character of that part of the Sacrifice. Any irreverence or wilfull distraction on our part at such a time would seem almost to partake of the nature of sacrilege, so great would be the insult offered thus to Our Lord, at the very time of His coming amongst us.

A German writer tells of a sacrilegious parody of the sacred words of Consecration, and of the punishment that followed, in a village of his own country, in the year 1807. A blasphemer took it into his head to turn these words into ridicule. Sitting down to table with his companions, he takes some bread and wine, and says over them, with mock solemnity: "This is my Body: this is my Blood." No sooner had he completed the parody, than he laid his head on the table, and in a few minutes he died!

At the very moment the words of Consecration are uttered in the Mass, they effect what they express, that is, they transubstantiate the bread and wine into the real Body and Blood of Christ. In the life of Saint Louis, King of France, we read that Mass was one day being said in his palace, when, at the words of Consecration, Our Lord appeared visibly present on the altar, under the form of a beautiful child, whom all were enraptured to see. Word was immediately sent to the king to come and witness the miracle God was working to prove the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. But Louis stirred not. "I firmly believe already," he said, "that Christ is truly present in the Holy Eucharist: I

do not wish to lose the merit of my faith by going to see this miracle." And he did not go.

On the other hand, want of faith was once miraculously rebuked, when in the village of Bolsena, in Italy, a priest while saying Mass allowed himself to have doubts as to the Real Presence. Our Lord, to lead him to better dispositions caused the sacred Host to pour forth blood, so that the corporal and altar cloths were all saturated. The Pope, Urban IV, on hearing the miracle, had the corporal taken to him, and mindful of the entreaties already made to him, regarding the establishment of a feast of the Blessed Sacrament, was led to hasten the institution of the festival of Corpus Christi, which has been solemnly observed in the Church ever since.

It need hardly be said that it is only the priest duly ordained that can effectively pronounce these solemn words, since he alone has received the awful powers of consecration, when he was ordained and raised to the sublime dignity of the priesthood of the New Law. They are valid and effective, no matter by whom pronounced, by saint or sinner, provided only he be duly ordained, for the priestly character and power can never be lost. Thus had the unhappy Judas ever said Mass, his utterance of these words would have been as marvellously productive of the Real Presence, as when any of the other apostles did so. God, in His goodness, does not allow the validity of the Sacrifice to depend on the dispositions of the priests who offer it, so we need not be anxious under this head, nor worry ourselves with uncharitable doubts or suspicions, as to the dispositions of the priest at the Altar. His responsibility is his own, and does not concern us, nor does it affect the validity of the Sacrament or Sacrifice of which he is the minister.



# The Inward Grace

Like all the other Sacraments, the Holy Eucharist contains three distinct and essential parts two of these we have already considered, namely, the Outward Sign and Divine Institution. Come we now, therefore, to the third essential, and that is the Inward Grace it bestows, a very practical subject for us all. Here, we have to ask and answer the question: Why does Our Lord give Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist?

In reply, we must first of all remember that all the Sacraments give or increase what is called Sanctifying Grace, or Divine Chant, in the soul. Baptism confers it in the first instance, and should it unhappily be lost by mortal sin, Penance can restore it to the contrite heart. The other Sacraments increase and strengthen this first Grace, which is presumed to exist already in the soul, when they are sought for and received.

But we must furthermore bear in mind that each Sacrament has its own peculiar effect to produce in the soul, its own special graces to bestow – sacramental graces they are called, or why should there be need for seven Sacraments? It is to these special effects or inward graces of the Holy Eucharist that we have now to give our attention, and a very profitable study it should prove itself to be. The graces it gives are many.

1. *The Life of the Soul* – Our Lord says: " He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. ... He that eateth this bread shall live for ever" (John 6:58,59).

Divine Grace is the life of the soul, as the soul itself is of the body. When considering the types and figures of the

Eucharist, we saw how the Tree of Life, in the Garden of Eden, was one of them, inasmuch as that tree was intended to be the support of the bodily life of Adam and Eve, just as the Holy Eucharist is the supernatural life of our souls. The Sacramental Grace of this Divine Gift is: a help to enable us to live by Christ, to preserve the supernatural life, and perfect the union of Charity.

a. This it does by weakening the force of concupiscence within us. From the day of the Fall, we are prone to evil of every sort and especially to concupiscence. The evil inclinations, sometimes so strong within, would assuredly consume or expel the love of God in the human heart, unless their strength were weakened and their fires cooled by the mighty graces of Holy Communion. The presence therein of the Sanctity of God prevails over concupiscence, which is thereby tamed and subdued, in proportion to the fulness of our love and devotion in receiving this Sacrament.

b. Then it wonderfully cools the passions of the heart. When the Sacred Body of the Lord enters our own, and His Precious Blood courses through our veins, we have a counterpoise to the allurements of sense, and a powerful means of overcoming the temptations of the flesh, so that our fallen nature is purified by its contact with the pure Humanity of Christ: body and soul are alike sanctified thereby, the passions are allayed and restrained. Granted water in sufficient abundance, no fire however fierce has ever been able to resist it. So the human passions cannot resist the all-restraining force of the Divine presence within us.

c. In this manner, we grow in likeness to our Divine Guest, by the humility, meekness, and other virtues we are enabled to practice, and thus we come to live by Him, with a supernatural life, which is derived from Himself to us, and this is the first effect which the Holy Eucharist produces

within us. As two friends living together insensibly take on each other's ways and come to resemble each other in habits of thought and conduct, so too is it with our souls in Holy Communion.

As then the Blessed Sacrament is in a special way the Life of the soul, we are clearly bound to receive It: " Except you eat the flesh of the son of man ... you shall not have life in you" (John 6:54). For, if Our Lord was willing to give us His Flesh and Blood in this adorable Sacrament, to be the very life of our souls, surely He would mean us to approach and receive It; otherwise, His loving condescension would be of no avail, and His object in instituting the Sacrament would be frustrated. By means of it, we abide in Jesus, and He in us, He thus becoming the life of our souls.

2. *The Food of the Soul* - When a child comes safely into the world, it has life and movement of its own, but this life needs to be supported and maintained by food suitable to its age and condition, otherwise it must soon waste away and die. So is it likewise with the supernatural life of the soul. Acquired at the font of Baptism, it too stands in need of food and support. Now, as the grace of God is the spiritual life of the soul thus imparted to it, so the Holy Eucharist is the spiritual food by which that life is preserved and strengthened.

In a previous chapter, the manna, given to the Jews in the desert for their bodily support, was shown to be a lively image of this heavenly Bread, which is meant to be the food of our souls. The many points of resemblance between the two were there set out at some length, and need not to be repeated now; here we have the type and the anti-type. What it *is* important to know and remember is that, as the Holy Eucharist contains in Itself all sweetness and every grace, so we must approach the Altar often to receive it, in

order that our soul may thrive and grow strong on this Bread of Heaven, just as our body needs frequent feeding, if it is not to languish and weaken.

In the early ages of the Church, the fervour of the Faithful led them to go frequently, even daily, to receive their Lord in Holy Communion. In the course of time, however, that fervour began to cool down, and they failed to receive this Sacrament with anything like the regularity of earlier times, so much so, indeed, that the Church felt herself constrained to enact laws on the subject, and now obliged them to receive It on each of the three chief festivals of the ecclesiastical year, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. Then again as the ages went by, even this little the Faithful found to be too' heavy an obligation, and their zeal and love for Our Lord in His Sacrament of love became so weak and cold that a further relaxation in the law was granted; for the Church is a loving mother, and tries to adapt her laws and regulations to the weakness of her children. Thus it is that the fourth Council of Lateran, a.d. 1215, laid down the present law as to the reception of the Holy Eucharist, known as the fourth commandment of the Church, which runs as follows: "To receive the Blessed Sacrament at least once a year, and that at Easter or thereabouts." This is the existing law in our own day, and it is hard to see how the Church could carry her condescension any further, no matter how indifferent her children might become. For if, according to Our Lord's words, our souls cannot live, except we eat His Divine Flesh, we cannot well receive it less than once in the year, as our spiritual food: this would seem to be an irreducible minimum.

The word "year" means a year reckoned from Easter to Easter, so that sometimes it may be a period of thirteen months, sometimes of eleven only, according to the dates on which Easter may fall in consecutive years. There is a

considerable length of time allowed for the fulfillment of the duty, so that all may have time and opportunity for it, no matter what their occupation may be, no matter how busy their lives. In England, generally, the period fixed by authority of the Church begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts down to Low Sunday included – a period of nearly eight weeks – implied by the word “thereabouts.” If this time expires without the obligation being complied with, the obligation itself does not thereby cease to bind, but remains in force and will do, till it *is* fulfilled; it is like an honest debt, which *must* be paid.

Easter is the time appointed for this duty, because the institution of the Eucharist took place near that festival. Moreover Our Lord on Easter day rose gloriously from the dead, the type of our rising from the tomb of sin, by sincere repentance: our resurrection to grace should coincide with His resurrection to life. Again, Easter falls in the spring-time of the year, when all nature revives and returns to fresh life and vigour. There would thus seem to be a real harmony between the natural and spiritual worlds, if our souls, too, at this time be refreshed and reinvigorated by a fervent reception of the Holy Eucharist, their Divine food, as the trees and flowers receive the new sap of returning life.

The Faithful would do well to try and make their “Easter duty,” as it is commonly called, early on in Lent: this greatly helps to make sure that it shall be done. If, as too often is the case, some delay and put off and off to the end of the prescribed time, it may easily be, and at times does happen, that something or other comes in the way to prevent their obeying the law, and as the time is at an end, they suddenly discover that the allotted period is past and they have not fulfilled the paschal precept. The punishment ordered by the Church to be inflicted on such as fail in this weighty obligation is deprivation of Christian burial, if they die

without repairing the omission. This penalty, it is true, is not nowadays usually enforced, but at least it shows us what the mind of the Church is in regard to this important command, for it is one that binds under pain of mortal sin, to die in which involves, of course, eternal damnation. No wonder then the Church decrees a punishment against such rebellious subjects as refuse to comply with her wishes.

Saint Gregory the Great was once saying Mass for one who had died some time before. While he was saying *Requiem aeternam*, at the Introit, he heard a voice saying: "I shall never have eternal rest." Thinking it to be an illusion, the Saint recommenced the Introit, and again heard the same distressing voice. He continued, however, and completed the Holy Sacrifice, then God made known to him that the unhappy man for whom he was praying was lost eternally, for having, deliberately and through his own fault, omitted to fulfill the precept of Easter Communion, on account of some injury he refused to pardon.

It is very desirable that the Faithful should receive their Easter Communion in their own parish church, so as to edify thereby the members of their own congregation and avoid scandal amongst them, who might reasonably suppose they had neglected it, and at the same time afford satisfaction and pleasure to the pastor of their souls, who rejoices to feed them with his own hand, and personally give them this heavenly Bread, as the spiritual food of their souls. It is true that in England, the Easter precept may be fulfilled in any parish, but one's own is the natural place wherein to make it. In some Catholic countries, it is, or used to be, of obligation for each one to receive at least Easter Communion in his own parish church; such, at any rate, is still the Catholic spirit which the Faithful should try to follow; this should be their guide in such matters, so far as may lie within their power.

In the Lateran decree will be noted the words, “at least” once a year. The law does not limit the Faithful to one Communion a year, but binds them to receive it at least once in that time. On the contrary, the Church’s desire is, and ever has been, that the Faithful should approach frequently to the Holy Table, so as to increase the strength of their souls and enable them to avoid tepidity and sin. As the body needs abundant nourishment, so too does the soul. The early Christians, as history testifies, communicated every day, and the present Holy Father, Pius X, is endeavouring to bring back the ancient practice amongst us, for all classes of people, the perfect and the imperfect alike: the former that they may grow in perfection, the latter that they may become perfect. On this subject, a lengthy chapter will follow. Meanwhile, we can remember that the second object of Our Lord’s giving Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist is that He may truly become the Food of our souls.

3. *Strength in Temptation* – When God sent His destroying Angel, in the darkness of the night through the land of Egypt, to slay the first-born in every house of the Egyptians, as a punishment for their refusal to release the Israelites from slavery, the Angel passed over the houses of the Chosen People, for their doorposts were marked with the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and death did not enter there (Exodus 12:23).

We may find here an image of what takes place in the souls of those who receive Holy Communion in worthy dispositions. They are washed in the Precious Blood of the Lamb, and thereby are strengthened to resist the assaults of the ministers of death, Satan and his angels. They are fortified and invigorated by this “wine which brings forth virgins,” and enabled to withstand most effectively such temptations as may assail them, especially temptations against the holy Virtue. The Devil seems to lose power over

souls that are sprinkled with the Blood of Christ in Holy Communion. Not that the Holy Eucharist frees us from temptation, for “the life of man upon earth is a warfare” (Job 7:1), and this warfare will only cease with our last breath, but it is that by frequent reception of this most holy Sacrament, we gain special grace and strength to resist and overcome temptation. The world in which we live and move is as a fire, through which we have to pass, and, left to ourselves, it would be impossible for us to escape without injury to our souls. But bathed as they may be in Our Lord’s Precious Blood, they are to a great extent rendered proof against the voice of the Tempter. The three children in the fiery furnace walked in the midst of the flames, praising God; not a hair of their heads was singed, nor their garments altered, nor did the smell of fire pass over them. They went out from amid the fire without hurt or harm of any kind, for the Angel of the Lord went down and drove the flames away from them (Daniel 3). Why were they not consumed? Because of the angel who was with them in the midst of the flames. After Communion, there is one greater than angels within us, the God of infinite power and strength, who fights our battles and leads us to victory. Thus does this Sacrament protect us against the fires of temptation, spread like a net over the face of the earth, for, go where we will, temptation is ever at our side, even in the holiest of places, and at the most solemn moments.

What seems to be a well authenticated instance of the power of Holy Communion over even the flames of material fire is related of a young child in Constantinople, in the sixth century. It was the custom then, when the Blessed Sacrament was renewed in the Ciborium, to distribute among young and innocent children the sacred Hosts that remained from the last consecration. It happened one day that a little Jewish boy was brought from the schools, along with the other children, for this purpose, and received



Communion with them. On reaching home, his father who was a glass-founder by trade, questioned him as to the cause of his returning so late from school. The child related very simply what had happened, whereupon the father, blinded by fury and by bitter hatred of the Christian Religion, seized the child and flung him into the red-hot furnace, where the glass was melted. The mother, unaware of what had happened, filled the house with her cries and lamentations, on discovering her loss. She sought everywhere her missing child, and on the third day, chancing to pass by the furnace, heard a voice calling her by name. On opening the furnace door, she beheld her child seated in the midst of the flames, alive and uninjured by the raging fire. In reply to his mother's anxious inquiries he said, on being delivered: "A lady in purple often came to me during these days and threw water around me to put out the fire: she also brought me food." The whole city was soon filled with the news of this prodigy, which resulted in the immediate conversion of the mother and child. The unhappy father remained unmoved, and was condemned to death by the Emperor Justinian for attempting the murder of his child, through hatred of the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist.

If the Holy Communion could thus preserve a child's body from the flames of material fire in a glass-furnace, what may we not expect it to do when our souls are encompassed by the fires of temptation of many kinds and of persistent violence? Hence it is that souls sorely tried are strongly urged and recommended to go frequently to the Holy Table, that they may bathe in the Precious Blood of their Saviour, and so be fortified to resist all the fiery darts of the Wicked One. No more efficacious remedy can be suggested to them, for one of the great effects of the Eucharist is that it bestows strength on the soul in time of temptation.

4. *Remission of Venial Sin* – Of its own efficacy, the Holy Eucharist destroys venial sin in the soul, not directly as sacramental absolution does, but indirectly by exciting in it acts of charity, including hatred of the sin. For of course every sin, no matter how trifling it may seem, must be repented of in the heart before God can ever forgive it. This effect of Holy Communion ought to be to the devout Christian a source of comfort and delight – that his daily faults of vanity, impatience, self-seeking, and the rest, which he truly regrets, are blotted out from his soul by his fervent communions, and not only the sins themselves, but also some of the punishment due to them, so that the devout Communicant may look forward with confidence to a short purgatory. What an incentive to make us approach worthily this great Sacrament, and also frequently, seeing what a purifying influence it exerts over the soul!

5. *Courage for the Fulfillment of Duty* – When we read the lives of the Saints and of the Fathers of the Church, still more the lives of the Martyrs, we are amazed at the heroic courage they displayed in times of opposition and trial, and especially amid the tortures and torments of martyrdom. These oftentimes were of the most barbarous and brutal kind, invented by the fiendish ingenuity of inhuman rulers. And yet the Martyrs faced them all, and bore them with a smile upon their lips, going cheerfully to prison and death for the Faith. Confessors and Christian missionaries have braved without flinching the difficulties and dangers that confronted them in their various undertakings for the glory of God. But whence all this courage? Whence this devotion to duty? Where did these servants of God receive the fortitude and endurance they displayed in the midst of their trials? It was from the fervent reception of Holy Communion. This great gift of God was the source of their strength.

In the first ages, when the Faithful suffered such grievous persecutions, it was customary to entrust the Blessed Sacrament under the form of bread to their pious care, for the purpose of being conveyed to prisoners for the Faith, or to be privately received by themselves at home, should the danger of being apprehended suddenly present itself, that they might partake of this Food of the strong, and gain strength for the contest. The acolyte, Saint Tharcisius, was arrested by the pagans whilst carrying the consecrated Host on one of these occasions, and was stoned to death because he would not betray it to them.

Many are the examples we read of in the lives of the Saints, or in the pages of ecclesiastical history, proving how truly the Holy Eucharist is the source of courage and strength. The following are two instances:

The Annals of the Propagation of the Faith relate that, during a cruel persecution that raged against the Christian Religion in the kingdom of Tongking, the power and efficacy of the Eucharist in sustaining the courage of the martyrs was manifest even to the infidels. While the glorious champions of Christ were cruelly racked and scourged, or their flesh was torn off their bones with pincers, the holy name of Jesus was ever on their lips, and they continued to profess the Faith with undaunted courage. The Mandarins, amazed at a fortitude so far beyond the power of human nature, attributed it with truth to the heavenly Food which the Christians partook of in their assemblies. "Truly," they would say, "this man has been eating of that enchanted bread which casts a spell over the soul!"

A gentleman once went to visit a hospital that was under the care of nuns. At the time of his visit, an operation had to be performed on one of the patients, which caused her intense pain, and her cries of anguish resounded throughout the

house. This gentleman could not endure them, and instantly left the ward. The Sisters alone remained, calm and firm, at the side of the poor woman. "How can these good Sisters stand there so courageously," he asked of the Superioress, "when even I, who have strong nerves, can bear it no longer?" "Sir," she replied, pointing to the Tabernacle in their little chapel, "it is there that they get the courage and strength which you so much admire. It is Jesus Himself who gives it to them in the Holy Eucharist."

Why should not we also go to the Tabernacle to obtain courage and strength in our trials? Instead of murmuring at our lot, or rebelling against Providence (which will not remove our difficulties, but on the contrary make us chafe the more under their weight), let us go to the source whence Saints and Martyrs drew their fortitude and courage, and we shall be able, like them, to face our responsibilities and fulfil our duty, in spite of all repugnance and of every obstacle, and even to rejoice, as they did, in that which to flesh and blood is unpleasant. Our experience will justify our wisdom in adopting this course.

6. *Spiritual Sweetness* – Sometimes gladness and joy inundate the soul, when Our Lord becomes her guest in Holy Communion. We read of Saints who have been thus favoured of God, and have even experienced delicious tastes in the mouth, when receiving the Blessed Sacrament. This is not a usual effect of the Holy Eucharist, still less a necessary one, but rather a favour sometimes granted through the goodness of God, perhaps to encourage souls in the path of virtue, especially converts or beginners in the spiritual life, or again, to console those who have just risen from the tomb of sin to a sincere resolution of leading now a better life. It is like giving sweets to little children to please them, and encourage them on to do well. Saint Rose of Lima seems to have been in an especial manner thus favoured by Heaven.

The delight of her soul in Holy Communion was reflected in the fire that sparkled in her countenance, betraying the flames of love that consumed her heart. We read of a similar privilege bestowed on the holy widow, Saint Ida.

Yet after all, this sweetness is but a favour, and usually a passing one only, and is not necessary for us. On the contrary, it might to some even prove a danger; for it is quite possible that we should incline to love and serve God, merely for the delights bestowed in Holy Communion, and if the sweetness were withdrawn, we might cease to love Him then for His own sake, while in time of trial, we might even come to betray Him! Hence, to guard our humility, and prevent our being puffed up at the thought of such favours being granted, God, in His wisdom, usually allows the soul only a limited pleasure and delight in receiving the Sacraments.

In some cases, He even tries souls by allowing aridity and dryness to overtake them, as was the case with Saint Teresa, whose desolation of spirit, in spite of her frequent Communion, lasted, for her greater merit and reward, even for many years in succession.

Still, it is true to say that spiritual sweetness and tenderness are oftentimes one of the results of a good Holy Communion. "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet" (Psalm 33:9). In any case, sweetness or encouragement is granted towards the fulfillment of duty, and the performance of works of Charity, as just seen under the previous heading.

*7. Germ of Glory* - In the Incarnation, Our Lord took on Himself the nature of man, and thereby became united in blood to the whole human race; while in Holy Communion, He is bodily united to the individual souls of men. Through this close and wonderful union which Our Lord thus deigns

to effect with us, we grow more and more in grace here, which is the seed of eternal glory hereafter. Saint Paul reminds us that our body becomes part of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 5:30). Now to the Body of Our Lord eternal glory is certainly due, and hence to us also, as members of His Body, His flesh and bone. The Holy Eucharist confers upon us a right and title to a future glorious resurrection, according to the promise of Our Lord Himself: "I will raise him up in the last day" (John 6:55). The germ of glory, then, is planted in our body, and lies, as it were, dormant during the long winter of the grave, but, when the spring returns, when the Resurrection is announced, in the fullness of God's time, then will this germ spring forth into the bloom and beauty of a glorified body for eternity.

Hence the anxiety of the Church to bestow Holy Communion as early as she can on the young ones of her flock, that they may have this germ of glory planted in good time within them, so that, called to God in youth or in old age, they may be fully entitled to a glorious eternity in His presence; formerly Holy Communion was given to children just after their Baptism.

See here the magnificent results that flow from the worthy reception of Holy Communion. See the many fruits we may gather from this beautiful Tree of Life planted by Our Lord in His Church for our use! See what are the inward graces bestowed by the Sacrament of the Eucharist! Can we be surprised that the Church, for the benefit of their souls, insists on all the Faithful receiving it at any rate once in the year? And can we not understand her earnest desire to see us approach frequently, very frequently, even daily, to this abundant source of all spiritual good?

This question of frequent Communion must be the subject of a separate chapter.

# Communion Under One Kind

Hitherto we have always spoken of the bread and wine as the two elements constituting the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and yet we daily witness the Faithful going to the Altar, to receive it under the form of bread only, while it is the priest alone who receives under both kinds, when he offers the Holy Sacrifice, and therein consecrates the two. It becomes necessary, therefore, to devote some attention to this subject of Communion under one kind only, a subject that causes surprise to many outside the Church, to whom we must be able to give an explanation of what to them seems difficult to reconcile with the words of Scripture, and to make clear to them why the Cup is withheld from the Laity.

The difficulty will be easily solved, if we recall to mind the doctrines of the Real Presence and the Incarnation. In Holy Communion we receive Our Lord as He is now – a living body. Now, where the living body is there also must the blood be, and there, too, the soul; and through the Incarnation, Our Lord's human body was united to His Divinity, and once united, they can never be separated for all eternity: this hypostatic, or personal, union of the two natures can never cease. When then the words of Consecration are pronounced over the bread, we have present, under the form of bread, not merely Our Lord's Body, but the whole Christ – Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. In like manner, when the wine is consecrated, we have present, under the form of wine, not only Our Lord's Blood, but again Christ Himself – God and Man. We use the word *Concomitance* to express this doctrine of the Church. Moreover, all this is true not only of every consecrated host all the world over, but of every particle of such host, as the

Council of Trent declares; for, Christ being now glorified in Heaven, His body is no longer subject to suffering or death. Were it otherwise, He would be slain again every time Mass is said, because in virtue of the words of the two-fold consecration, the Body would be separated from the Blood. A broken mirror will reflect an object in each of its parts; the voice of one man may be heard by a thousand or more listening to him, so Our Lord in the Eucharist is truly received whole and entire under every consecrated particle of bread, and under each drop of consecrated wine, just as our soul is whole and entire in all our members, for it is a spirit and indivisible.

For this reason, it is quite lawful for the priest, when distributing Holy Communion, to divide particles, if he sees he is about to run short of them for the numbers of the Faithful coming to the Altar, a practice not desirable in itself, perhaps, yet preferable to the loss of Holy Communion by a number of persons, and practice grounded on the solid principle that Our Lord's Body is now indivisible, and where that is, His whole being is, as already expressed:

"There is no breakage, no dividing,  
Whole He comes to every one."

It is on account of this belief that the priest, at the end of Mass, gathers up very carefully any stray particles that may perchance be lying on the corporal; these he puts into the chalice, that they may be consumed along with the Precious Blood; for each little particle that may chip off from the consecrated Host truly contains the Real Presence of Our Lord, and therefore must not be knowingly allowed to remain in or on the corporal.

For a similar reason, out of respect for any such particles as may after all remain on corporals, these and the



mundatories, that serve to clean and dry the chalice, must be washed in three separate waters by one in Holy Orders, before they are handed over to the laundry or the housekeeper, to be done up again for further use. This triple water is not to be thrown carelessly away, but is put down the sacrarium, that it may run into the earth. All this proves how jealous is the care the Church ever takes of the consecrated elements, based on her deep belief of the Real Presence under each of them alone.

In spite of what opponents may say, the doctrine of the Church, as to Communion under one kind only, is quite in accordance with the teaching of Holy Writ, and is therein fully justified. For, as the Council of Trent again remarks, if Our Lord said: "Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you," He also said: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (John 6:54,52). If Our Lord said: "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life," He said also: "The bread that I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:55, 52). And again, though Christ said: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me, and I in him," He likewise said: "He that eateth this bread shall live for ever" (John 6:57,59)- Thus we have our Divine Saviour, who instituted the Holy Eucharist, making the same promises to those that eat only as to those that both eat and drink, because, whether under the form of bread alone, or under the form of wine alone, He is received whole and entire, the whole Christ, God and man.

Similarly, Saint Paul boldly declares him who eats *or* drinks unworthily to be guilty of the Body *and* the Blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:27), for, whether under one species or the other, the whole Christ is contained and received, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. These words clearly suppose the Body and Blood to be present under both or either species,

otherwise how could the Apostle be warranted in making so strong an assertion? They also imply that the two species are not necessarily to be taken together in Holy Communion.

The practice of the Church from the earliest ages teaches the same doctrine, and confirms our belief in the truth here asserted, that under either kind alone we receive our Divine Lord whole and entire. For, from the very days of the Apostles, Communion under the form of bread alone was constantly practised, as it is now in our own time. When the followers of Our Lord were subjected to the terrible persecutions of the first centuries of the Christian era, and had to serve God in fear and trembling and in secret, the Holy Eucharist, in the form of bread only, was oftentimes committed to their pious care, by them taken to their homes, and then received, when in danger of being apprehended, so that they might be strengthened in courage by this heavenly Food, if summoned before the judges to profess their faith and die.

In like manner, the Blessed Sacrament used to be sent, in the form of bread only, to such as were in prison, and could not therefore repair to the Church to receive it. Saint Tharcisius was arrested by the pagans, while thus carrying the Holy Eucharist on one such occasion, and was stoned to death, because he refused to betray it to them.

Another instance of the Church's practice herein is that it was quite customary in former ages to give the Holy Eucharist to little infants, just after their baptism, by administering to them a few drops of the consecrated wine only, not the consecrated bread, but only the one species.

The Anchorets, too, who withdrew to the deserts, in order to attain to greater perfection, by leading solitary lives away from the world, used to receive and preserve the Holy

Eucharist, under the form of bread only, and communicate themselves therewith, as they might desire.

From such testimonies as these, Ecclesiastical History is able to show that, from the earliest ages, Communion was often given under one species only, and they prove that we of the twentieth century agree in faith and practice with the early Christians, believing in the real and permanent presence of Our Lord, under either species, whether of bread or of wine alone.

By the commencement of the twelfth century, the idea began to crystallise that this practice of administering the Holy Eucharist under the form of bread only, which was so usual in given cases, should now become the rule rather than the exception. A number of circumstances led to this common feeling; for instance, accidents had happened, whether through awkwardness or inattention, in giving the Cup to the general Faithful, and the Precious Blood had been spilled, which we can well imagine to be very easy.

As the numbers of the Faithful increased, the difficulty increased also of administering the Cup to large crowds of people, gathered together at the Altar rails.

Then again, if more wine were consecrated than proved to be needed for any given occasion, there was a danger of its becoming acid, and so losing its nature of wine. Now, when the accidents of wine are no longer there, then does the Real Presence cease to be there. This would be an irreverence to be avoided at all costs.

Moreover, numbers of people have a distaste for wine, and are really unable to take it, whom it would be cruel and unreasonable to compel to receive their Holy Communion under that form.

While lastly, as the Church developed and spread into the colder regions of the North, a scarcity of wine and a difficulty in obtaining it began to be felt, which almost put it beyond the reach of such countries to consecrate sufficient for the Faithful to receive under both species.

Thus, generally speaking, a desire to secure greater reverence for the Sacrament was the leading idea that induced the Church to legislate in the direction of requiring henceforth that the Laity should receive their communion under the form of bread alone. It was only, however, in the year 1414, that the Church definitely determined the matter, at the Council of Constance, in opposition to the teachings of John Huss and others, in Bohemia, who falsely asserted that the use of the Cup was absolutely essential. Such doctrine was never held by the Church; on the contrary, from all that has preceded, we know what had been a common practice with her, and what Our Lord Himself had said on the subject. The belief of the Faithful guarded them against ever thinking that they received less benefit from Communion under one kind than under both, while the Council of Trent authoritatively declares that they are not thereby defrauded of any grace necessary to salvation. With this infallible voice to guide us, we may rest well assured that we suffer no real loss, and may live in peace and security, giving a childlike obedience to the decisions of the Church.

It is entirely a matter of discipline only, and not of doctrine. The discipline of the Church may change from time to time, as circumstances may require; and, if ever it became necessary or advisable again, the Church could alter the decree of Constance, and require the Faithful to receive under both kinds. She would still be consistent and true to her teachings, while it is the heretics that are guilty of

innovation, in introducing a new principle, opposed to the teaching of antiquity.

How marvellously one the Church ever is in her doctrine! Unity is one of the chief marks of the true Church, and is in a conspicuous manner shown forth in this instance, that while her ceremonial and practice may vary, and have varied, in different ages, always and everywhere her teaching is uniform, that, under each species separately, there are truly and really present the Body and Blood, the Soul and Divinity of Our Lord. On this dogma is based her practice of administering Communion under one species only.

# Preparation for Communion

If we try to realize the infinite Goodness of Our Lord in giving Himself to us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and recall to mind the bounteous graces He bestows on those who receive Him worthily, we may well marvel and wonder how we can ever duly prepare ourselves in becoming manner to receive such a guest into our undeserving souls. And yet, we *must* approach to receive Him, or incur the guilt of grievous offence before Him. What, then, have we to do? What steps can we take, to fit ourselves for His condescending visit?

The penny Catechism reminds us in plain and simple terms that, to receive Holy Communion worthily, we must be in the state of grace, and be fasting from midnight. These two conditions have two very distinct objectives, for the first refers exclusively to the soul, and the second to the body only. Over and above these essential conditions, others may be added, that may tend to lessen our unworthiness, and so make our Communions more fruitful of spiritual good to our souls. The distinction of soul and body naturally makes this subject of Preparation fall into two parts, which treated separately will conduce to clearness and simplicity.

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## I. Dispositions of Soul.

When the priest at Mass is about to consume the Victim that has been offered in the Sacrifice, and make his own Communion, he exclaims: "*Domine, non sum dignus*," "Lord, I am not worthy." These words, first spoken by the Centurion (Matthew 8:8), we should make our own, in all humility recognizing our sinfulness and unfitness to approach and receive the infinite Sanctity of God; and yet we are not free

to abstain from so doing. Hence must we do what lies in our power to prepare our souls for the celestial food we herein receive. There are several steps we may take to this end.

1. *The State of Grace* - Clearly the first essential for the worthy reception of any of the Sacraments of the Living is that our souls be free from the guilt of mortal sin, and be in the state of grace, pleasing to God; how especially necessary is this for the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of Sacraments! Food can be of no avail to a dead body, nor can the Holy Communion, our spiritual food, be of any use to our souls, if dead before God by mortal sin. To receive Our Lord into a soul in such condition would be a grievous insult to the Divine Majesty and Sanctity. For grace and mortal sin cannot co-exist in the same soul, just as darkness and light mutually exclude each other. Therefore S. Paul reminds us that a man must prove himself before eating this bread and drinking the chalice (i Cor. xi. 28). According to the Council of Trent, this proving of oneself consists in making a good sacramental confession, should he be conscious of mortal sin; it is the means instituted by our merciful Saviour for cleansing the soul from personal grievous fault (Sess. XIII., c. 7). As Our Lord washed the feet of His Apostles, to denote the purity of soul with which they should receive their first Holy Communion, so by the Sacrament of Penance our souls are cleansed from sin, clothed again with the wedding garment of grace, and made pleasing in the sight of their heavenly Guest; then may we, without reproach, go forward to receive Him in the Holy Banquet.

This primary condition for a good Communion must always have earnest attention, and we must never dare to approach the Holy Table, if conscious of mortal sin, or we shall turn that which is meant to be the food and strength of the soul into a most deadly poison.

2. *Freedom from Venial Sin* – This is a further degree of preparation we should aim at, as far as possible. If you leave a mirror lying on the table of a room, even of one that is not used, you will find at the end of the week the mirror is all covered with dust, in such a way that it can scarcely reflect the image of an object put before it. This may typify the state of a soul covered with venial sins. They do not destroy its life, as a blow with a hammer would destroy the mirror, but, like the dust lying on it, they tend to dim the lustre, and disfigure the beauty of the soul that is subject to them. These lesser sins also we must remove, by acts of contrition, the use of Holy Water or other Sacramentals, thereby adorning and beautifying our hearts the more for Our Lord. We would carefully remove all dust from the furniture of our rooms, were we expecting a distinguished guest coming to visit us. Hence, a brief act of contrition spoken from the heart, is greatly recommended just before we go up to the Altar rails.

Two children went with cans to a river to fetch water. The cans were of the same size and filled to the brim when they returned, yet one brought back more water than the other. What was the reason of this? Was it because there was not water enough for both? No, it was because one child had nothing but water in his can, while the other had some sand and pebbles in his, so that there was not room for so much water. – Two persons go to Holy Communion, and yet one comes back with more grace in his soul than the other. And what is the reason? Because one empties his soul of all venial sin and imperfection, hence there is more room for the love of God to fill it, than in the other soul which is not so well purified and prepared.

3. *Actual Devotion* – By this is meant, not sensible sweetness in the soul, which we cannot always command, but a deep realization of the greatness of the act we are going to



perform, which will lead us to do all that lies in our power to do it well. To this end, instruction as to the nature and effects of the Sacrament is very conducive, for we cannot feel love and devotion for anything, unless first of all we know something of the claims it has upon us. Hence it is that children always need a course of instructions, before being admitted to make their first Communion, so that they may understand well what they are about to do, and be more fully penetrated with lively faith and reverence for the great mystery of the Eucharist; so true it is that dogma is the real source and foundation of genuine devotion. Besides children, to whom this primarily and chiefly applies, it would be well if those of older years could be persuaded to read or hear more on the subject, so that they too might have a deeper appreciation of the great act they perform in receiving Holy Communion, and so be able to draw greater benefit from this fountain of all grace.

In reference to instruction, it may be well just to mention that we are bound, in order fittingly to receive the Sacraments, to know at least the outline of the “Four great Truths,” as they are termed. Not that we need know them under that name, but at least we must be acquainted with the doctrines they imply. Briefly put, they are these:

a. The Existence of God: unless we know God, we cannot love and serve Him, and so attain to His eternal possession in Heaven.

b. The Unity and Trinity in God: there is but one God, but in the one Divine Nature there are three distinct Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, equal to each other in all things: this we call the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

c. The Incarnation and Death of Our Lord: through love for man, God the Son, second Person of the Blessed Trinity,

came down from Heaven, and assumed our human nature, that He might suffer and die for us, thereby making atonement for our sins, and redeeming our souls from sin and hell.

d. God rewards and punishes in death: according as we love and serve Him during life on earth, or refuse to obey His Divine commands, God rewards us in eternity with the possession of Himself in Heaven, or punishes with the unending pains of Hell.

These are the fundamental truths we must know, as a remote preparation for receiving Holy Communion, and it is a real act of charity to teach them to others, and to pray that the knowledge of them may extend throughout the world. The deeper our perception of God and His Revelation, the greater will be our love and devotion to Him, and the more heartfelt the religious fervour with which we shall approach to receive Him.

*4. Immediate Preparation* – When God brought His chosen people to the foot of Mount Sinai, there to promulgate to them His Law, He spoke to Moses and said: “Go to the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments” (Exodus 19:10). This was to be part of the immediate preparation for the great day to follow, on which God was to deliver His Will to men.

When Our Lord was about to eat the Last Supper with His Apostles, and then institute the Holy Eucharist, He sent two of His disciples into the City to prepare a large dining-room for the occasion, and there they prepared the Pasch (Mark 14:15). After rising from the table, Our Lord washed the feet of His disciples, and wiped them with a towel (John 13:5). All these details betoken the reverence and care He wished to

inspire them with for the great mystery about to be wrought in their midst.

So, too, must we make an immediate preparation for Holy Communion. When we rise in the morning, our first thoughts should turn to the great event of the day, and should occupy our minds till the moment it occurs. Go to church in good time, (somewhat earlier than the bulk of the Faithful, who are going to hear Mass only). How painful it is, yet how common, to see people coming late for Mass, without any compunction apparently, and then walking up to the Altar for Communion, as though they were merely going to receive a blessed candle or a palm leaf! This should not be, and would not be, were our faith deeper and more lively. Try, therefore, to go somewhat early to church, and when there, read the prayers or devotions before Communion. In doing this, endeavour to make your own the various sentiments they express. Don't be content with merely reading with your eyes the acts of faith, love, etc., but let those sentiments come from your heart, and thus be thoroughly in earnest, and mean what you say; this will excite fervour and devotion, which again will react upon you, and make you attentive and earnest. If time allow, add to such acts as these, which every prayer-book will contain, certain ejaculations of your own; as a rule, they will be more heartfelt and more efficacious than any set form of prayers can ever be. "Behold Noah, a just man, toiled a hundred years in building the ark, that he with a few might be saved; and I, how can I in one hour prepare myself to receive with reverence the Maker of the world?" - *Imitation of Christ*, 4

5. Above all, have always an *intention* in making your Communion, that is, have some special grace or graces to ask for, either for yourself or for others. Thus, beg for strength against temptation, for victory over some evil habit, for grace to practice some virtue. Offer your Communion for

the Church and her visible Head, for your neighbour's welfare, spiritual or temporal, for your country's good, for the sick, the dying or the dead. Don't forget to pray for your own family, parents for children, children for parents; and so forth, in endless variety. Having one or more definite objects to pray for, you will find from experience that you will make your Communion with more intense fervour, and so be likely to draw therefrom more fruitful results.

Such is the outline of the dispositions that should animate our soul, and such the preparation we should make before receiving Holy Communion. The more we throw ourselves into this work and the greater the care we take over it, the more abundant, too, will be the graces we shall receive.

"The most devout King David danced before the Ark of God with all his might, commemorating the benefits bestowed on the fathers in times past. He made musical instruments of sundry kinds, he put forth psalms and appointed them to be sung with joy; he himself likewise often sang to the harp, inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost. He taught the people of Israel to praise God with their whole heart, and to join their voices in blessing and magnifying Him every day.

"If so great devotion was then used, and such remembrance of the praise of God before the Ark of the Covenant, how great ought to be the reverence and devotion that I and all Christian people should have in the presence of this Sacrament, in the receiving of the all-transcending Body of Christ!" - *Imitation of Christ*, 4

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## II. Dispositions of Body.

When Our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist and gave it as Communion to the Apostles, they were not fasting, for they

had just concluded the Last Supper, the eating of the Paschal Lamb. And for some years, we know, the early Christians used to receive Holy Communion in the evening, their fast being already broken. They gathered together for the *Agapai*, or Charity-feasts, where the poor were fed by the alms of the Faithful, and then the “Supper of the Lord” followed, that is, Holy Communion was distributed. It was not long, however, before abuses began to creep in, and these meetings exceeded becoming bounds. Even in the days of Saint Paul we find excess in eating and drinking already frequent, and he strongly condemns the abuse (I Corinthians 11). Thus it was that the practice was discontinued, and it soon became the common law of the Church that the Faithful must receive Communion before partaking of any material food, and that law remains in force to the present day.

1. *Fasting* is the primary disposition of the body for receiving this Sacrament. Without considering the dangers arising from the early custom just referred to, it is clearly more befitting that on the day of our Communion, the nourishment of our souls should first be attended to, and then that of the body. This brings home in a very practical manner, and to some, perhaps, in a painful manner, the importance and dignity of the great Sacrament they receive. This strict law of fasting prevents at any rate the danger of irreverence through intemperance.

This natural fast, as it is termed, consists in abstaining from every kind of food and drink, and must be strictly observed from the previous midnight, out of the deep reverence we owe to the Blessed Sacrament. Should doubt or scruple arise as to whether we may have broken this fast, it is well to know what is required for breaking it, namely that what we take must be:

a. Of the nature of food. It is a question here of food of the body. Hence, to break the natural fast, some substance of the nature of food and capable of digestion must be taken. Therefore to take snuff, or to smoke, would not break the fast. Even though they may possibly help to support the body, in common parlance they would never be classed as food, nor would inhaling be, when needed for some throat affection. To indulge in these without necessity might be an irreverence, but could not be said to break the fast and make Communion impossible. Still less would the accidental swallowing of a three-penny bit break the fast, for clearly a piece of silver is in no sense food. On the other hand, to take medicine certainly would do so, for medicine can be assimilated to the system, and in fact is taken on that very principle, and we cannot usually follow the doctor's advice and take medicine on an empty stomach, on the morning of Holy Communion.

b. Taken from without: hence, remnants of a meal, taken the previous night and remaining in the teeth, would not break the fast; blood from bleeding gums in like manner, for it does not come from without, as would be the case, were we to suck a bleeding finger.

c. Swallowed down: it is not easy to swallow a mere drop of water, that is, to introduce it into the stomach, for the oesophagus, or food pipe, is very soft and moist, and a globule of water could not drop down that passage, as it might fall down the rigid windpipe. Consequently, to swallow a very little water would be a difficulty. Thus a drop of rain or a snowflake entering the mouth would at once become part of the saliva and never reach the stomach; the same may be said of a drop or two of water in the act of washing one's teeth.

2. *Tidiness* – Our Lord, it is true, does not look to the clothes we wear when we go to receive Him. Those who were along the highways and hedges, unprepared for any invitation, were compelled by the rich man to go in to the great supper he had prepared (Luke 14). Our Lord, in like manner, welcomes the poorest to His banquet just as much as the richest lady dressed in silks and satin.

At the same time, tidiness and cleanliness are within the reach of all; each one, therefore, no matter what his or her position in life may be, should endeavour to be neat and clean when approaching the Holy Table. Blessed Thomas More, even when in prison, dressed in his best on Sunday; would he not have done the same for Holy Communion? Saint Francis of Sales says our dress should not attract special attention, either by its excessive smartness, or by its remarkable shabbiness. Let all therefore dress becomingly, so far as their position requires, and (observe) as their means allow. This latter point is important; no one should go beyond his or her means, lest dressmakers or others remain unpaid for their labour and materials, a not uncommon occurrence! Let true reverence for the Blessed Sacrament be our aim, and it will be a good guide to us as to how we should dress and act.

3. *Reverent Demeanour* – Don't rush up to the Altar in a hurry, making a noise or staring about, all which would tend to distract both yourself and your neighbours, but go quietly and gently, hands joined and eyes cast down; there is no need of stiffness and effort, but do all things naturally. It is well to let those in front go up first, and avoid all crushing and blocking of the aisles. Always remove your gloves, (as you should likewise do at Confession). Worship is external as well as internal, and our whole being should share it on so solemn an occasion.

It may be well to say a few words here on the manner in which we should actually receive Communion. To do this in the right way would seem to be included among the dispositions of body.

1. Just before his own Communion in the Mass, the priest says three times over the *Domine, non sum dignus*, and thrice the server rings the bell, or strikes the gong, to remind the Faithful of the progress of the Sacrifice. It is at this point that Communicants should go to the Altar. At the sanctuary rails will usually be found the communion cloth, hanging down; take this in your hands and spread it out as a small table under your chin (not in front or even above your lips, as children sometimes do). The idea in this is that, if perchance the priest happen to drop a consecrated particle, it shall fall on to this table surface and not on to the floor. In some places, a linen-covered card is used instead of the cloth; in this case, as soon as you have received Communion yourself, hand on the card at once to your neighbour on your left.

2. Hold your head well up and keep your eyes closed; remember you are kneeling, and the priest is standing and therefore higher than yourself, consequently you must raise your face somewhat towards him. In doing this, open your mouth moderately, advancing the tongue over the lower lip; the priest will then lay the Blessed Sacrament upon it, and you draw in your tongue, with the Sacred Host resting on it. Don't move your head forward to receive the sacred particle; some seem as though they wanted to *take* Communion, instead of allowing the priest to *give* it them. It is an awkward practice, and not without danger, as the Blessed Sacrament might thus get broken and fall.

3. Leave the Altar rails as soon as you have received Communion. That is not the place to remain at to say your



prayers, while others behind are waiting till you retire, to follow and take your place. It is a kindly thing to remember your neighbour in such circumstances, and this thoughtfulness will be pleasing to the Divine Guest you have just received into your heart. On returning to your place, recollect yourself and dwell on the marvellous condescension of Our Lord in coming thus to visit you, and humble yourself at the thought of it. Meanwhile the sacred particle will be moistened, and you will probably have no difficulty in swallowing it. If, however, there is any little trouble over it, on no account try to remove it with your fingers, but use your tongue gently, and in a short time you will be able to take it down with ease. You will now be able to begin your thanksgiving.

# Exceptions to the Law of Fasting

1. *Viaticum* – This word means food for a journey, here the journey to eternity. So great is the wish of Holy Church that none of her faithful children should depart this life without spiritual food and strength on the way, that she allows those who are dying, or at least are thought to be in danger of death, to receive Holy Communion after breaking their fast, even, if necessary, after having taken all the meals of the day. The law of fasting, as we have seen, is one made by the Church herself; she can therefore dispense in her own legislation, if in her wisdom she thinks well to do so. In favour of the dying, then, she suspends this law, as otherwise many would be deprived of this spiritual strength in the hour of their greatest need. The danger of death, however, must arise from bodily sickness or disease, as for the reception of Extreme Unction, and not from the imminence of death from other causes, for instance, a coming battle for a soldier, a pending execution, in the case of a criminal.

The danger of death does not need to be immediate, but as soon as there is reasonable fear that death may result from the illness, the sick person is justified in receiving the last Rites, of which Viaticum is one. Therefore those in attendance should not delay sending for the priest till the danger is extreme, but give him timely notice of the case. When it is decided thus to administer Holy Communion, the sick room should be prepared and made tidy, as surely it would be, were some earthly visitor of rank expected to call. Have a small table near the bed head, with a white cloth spread over it; an empty wineglass is needed, with another vessel containing a little water. As a rule, the priest will bring everything else with him, yet, where it can be done,

the friends should place a crucifix on the table, along with two blessed candles and a flower or two, thus preparing a sort of altar, whereon to place the Blessed Sacrament, when he arrives. In the meanwhile, they would do well to prepare the patient for his Holy Communion, by saying with him some short prayers or ejaculations, without, however, tiring him with too many.

In the lives of the Saints we find touching examples of the fervour and devotion with which we should endeavour to receive our last Holy Communion. Thus Saint Thomas of Aquin, feeling- his end approaching, earnestly begged the last Sacraments to be given to him. In order to receive Holy Viaticum, he would be laid on ashes on the floor, and on this humble bed he made the most fervent acts of faith and love, and shortly after receiving, he gave up his soul to God.

The pious monarch, Saint Louis, King of France, being seized with a fatal illness, immediately turned his thoughts to God, to prepare for death. When Holy Viaticum was brought to him, he raised himself up to adore it, and received it with an abundance of tears, which testified to the fervour and tenderness of his love.

While Saint Teresa was lying on her bed of death, she asked to receive Holy Communion for the last time. When the priest came into the room, carrying the Blessed Sacrament, she raised herself up, as if to welcome her Jesus. "O my Lord and beloved spouse," she exclaimed, "at last has come the hour I have waited for so long, the hour when I am about to go to Thee for ever." Soon after this, having received the Holy Viaticum, she expired, and went to see, face to face, that Jesus whom she had always so tenderly loved.

The example of these Saints, so devoutly receiving their Viaticum, should lead us, while yet in good health, always to

approach Holy Communion with deep faith and humility, so that, when we come at last to receive it as Viaticum, we may in that hour of weakness, from mere habit even, excite ourselves to the same feelings of reverence and love. Saint Barbara, a martyred saint of the third century, is sometimes invoked, that her prayers may obtain for us the grace of receiving the last Rites before we die. Let us imitate in that hour the fervour of the Saints, and may our deaths be like unto theirs!

2. *Danger of profanation* may justify our receiving Communion after breaking our fast. If, for instance, a fanatical mob were about to attack a church and seize the Blessed Sacrament to desecrate it, not only a priest but even a layman would be justified in removing it to another place of safety, or if this could not be done, in consuming the sacred species, in spite of his not being fasting at the moment.

3. *Completion of the Sacrifice* – If a priest in saying Mass were suddenly taken ill, or came to die after the Consecration, another priest would have to continue and complete the Sacrifice; one who had not broken his fast should of course be preferred, but if none such could be found, then another who had broken it must do it instead. Similarly, if on receiving the Chalice, the Celebrant discovered it was not wine that was in it, but water or some other liquid, he would be bound to take wine, then consecrate and receive it, although by taking the water already, he had clearly broken his fast. The underlying principle in all this is, that the Sacrifice once truly begun by the Consecration, may not be left incomplete; this is a higher law than the ecclesiastical precept of fasting, and takes precedence, so that anyone witnessing such a case, which may be a very practical one, has no reason to be

shocked or surprised at seeing Holy Communion received by a priest who is no longer fasting.

4. *The New Law of 1906* – By decree of 7th December, the Holy See, in that year, granted special facilities in reference to Communion being received by those who are ailing and sick, though in no sense in danger of death; it mitigates considerably the difficulty of the law of fasting before Communion. After stating that petitions on behalf of the sick had been addressed to him, Pius X, consulting the Congregation of the Council, granted “that sick persons who have already been laid up for a month and have no sure hope of speedy recovery, shall be allowed, with the confessor’s approval, to receive the most Holy Eucharist, in spite of their having taken nourishment in the form of liquid.” Thus non-fasting Communion may now be received by the Faithful, under certain circumstances.

It is hardly possible to develop here the details of a subject which is somewhat intricate, but the confessor or parish priest will be able to advise such as may be in the unwelcome position of having to receive their Communion according to these new regulations, which show the indulgent character of the Church and her kind consideration for the weakness of her children.

# Thanksgiving After Communion

Father Faber writes of Holy Communion: “If ever there is a time for thanks too deep for words, it is when the Creator has been pleased to overwhelm His creature with this stupendous gift of Himself, and when He is actually within us. Hence it is that spiritual writers tell us, for awhile at least, not to open a book, but to commune with Jesus in our own hearts.”

After leaving the Altar rails, therefore, and returning to your place in church, try and follow the advice here given and enter into yourself for a short time, communing with the heavenly Guest you have received. Then you may take your book, and read the prayers given by way of devotions after Communion, here again, as in your preparation, endeavouring to feel in your heart the sentiments of the words you read with your eyes. Different books will give different forms of prayers to be said after Communion, but practically all of them contain in one form or other five chief acts, which are as follows:

1. *Adaptation* Naturally, our first duty, if our faith be lively and real, will be to fall down before the sovereign Lord we have received, and offer Him our profound adoration, as to the God of all things, who has deigned to come to visit us! What humble deference and outward homage should we not pay to the King, did he think fit to come to the lowly home where we live. What reverence and veneration should we not show to the Vicar of Christ, God’s representative on earth, if he deigned to honour us with a visit! Yet here, in Holy Communion, we receive the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” within us, Him who created our hearts and the entire universe around. To Him, therefore, as to our God, we owe

the highest form of worship we can pay to any being, that of profound adoration.

As the shepherds and the magi fell at the feet of the Divine Child in Bethlehem, so must we prostrate ourselves before the same Divine Saviour resting within us, making acts of faith in His real presence, acknowledging our nothingness before Him, and protesting our unworthiness to receive Him. The more perfectly we fulfil this first elementary duty, the more easily and thoroughly shall we do the rest.

2. *Contrition* is a second act; that is, we must declare once again our sorrow for having offended God, and renew our determination to avoid sin for the future. It is not that we are to worry ourselves and fret over the sins in detail that we have already confessed, but to remember in general that we are sinners before God, which will help to keep us humble in His presence. "I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me" are the words of King David (Psalm 1:5). They should be ours also, as an expression of sorrow for sin, the one thing that makes us displeasing in the eyes of God and unworthy to approach Him. Even after Communion, then, we should renew our contrition for the many offences we have committed against God during the years of life that have gone by.

3. *Thanksgiving* From the depths of our hearts, we must thank Our Lord for giving Himself to us in Holy Communion. It is a great act of condescension and love on His part thus to come and take up His abode within us worms of the earth, an honour and a grace for which we can never be too grateful. We may thank Him for the grace of being members of the true Church, and thereby being placed within reach of so many helps given through the Sacraments, and especially through the one we have just received, the greatest of them all. We can thank Him for the peculiar blessings which we

individually have received, and of which everyone has some to acknowledge. Thus, if we reflect and consider, we shall find many subjects for thanksgiving and praise, especially pleasing to God as proof of a grateful heart.

Imitate not the lepers of whom Our Lord complained: “Were not ten made clean, and where are the nine?” (Luke 17:17). These men, on being cleansed of their foul disease of leprosy by our Lord’s loving power, were so overjoyed and delighted, that away they went to their homes and their friends, announcing the glad tidings of their cure, which was quite natural for them to do, but they entirely forgot to thank the Benefactor who had healed them, and He complained of their ingratitude: “Where are the nine?” Let us, at any rate, guard against a similar defect, in failing to thank our Divine Guest for His many favours and graces.

On the contrary, imitate rather the family of Tobias. When through the good offices of the angel Raphael, they had received such signal mercies and blessings, they knew not how sufficiently to thank God and their benefactor; words failed them, to express their gratitude, so “they lying prostrate for three hours upon their face, blessed God, and rising up they told all His wonderful works” (Tobit 12:22). Here is the example we must follow, whenever we go to Holy Communion. Moreover, gratitude to God for graces already bestowed will be a powerful means to move Him to grant still more.

4. *Supplication*, or petition. Saint Teresa declares that the moments immediately following Holy Communion are most precious to the soul, for then we have Our Blessed Lord within our hearts, as upon a throne, and we can there present to Him our earnest petitions, make known all our wants, and beg such graces and blessings as we stand in need of. We should, therefore, avail ourselves of this happy



time, and never fail to make our requests, while the Sacred Species remain within us. Who is there that does not stand in need of Our Lord's bountiful mercy? Who amongst us but has many needs of soul and body to supply? Who but has many favours to ask for? Take then these precious moments, and ask freely and with much confidence, for the infinite Power of God is equal to all our wants, while His infinite goodness is most willing to bestow. If one were allowed a quarter of an hour in a mine of rubies or diamonds, and free to carry away all stones gathered in that precious quarter of an hour, how would he spend the time?

a. Spiritual graces. In the first place, attend to the needs of your soul, which are many and varied. Perseverance in God's love should have a foremost place in our petitions. We are now in the state of grace: but how long shall we maintain it! Yet, on this perseverance our eternal happiness depends. Saint Philip's daily prayer used to be: "O my God, keep Thy hand over me this day, or I shall do Thee all manner of harm." He recognized the necessity of the Divine protection, if sin were to be avoided; so, too, must sinners like ourselves be firmly convinced of the need of God's grace, if we hope to avoid offending Him grievously and so risking our salvation. Ask, therefore, for such gifts as you require: humility, charity, purity, zeal for God's glory, devotion to duty and so forth; grace to overcome some besetting temptation, to acquire some special virtue suitable to your present circumstances. There are countless favours of the spiritual order you may solicit, as countless as are the needs of your soul.

b. The Church. Every true Catholic must remember his obligation to the Church of which he is a member. It is through her that he received his baptism and all the other graces of God's Providence, during perhaps a long series of years. We must therefore not forget our obligations to her,

but pray God to strengthen her in the many persecutions and trials she has to undergo, and beg for her the light of the Holy Ghost in the times of darkness that overtake her. Under this heading, we include, of course, the Supreme Pontiff, Our Lord's Vicar on earth, and head of the Universal Church. What responsibilities are his! How great the care of all the churches, and how deep his anxieties! Consequently how urgent is the need that the Faithful should pray for him from time to time, especially after receiving Holy Communion. Then our own Bishop has a claim upon our love, for in his own measure he too has responsibilities and difficulties, hence we should do what we can to lessen these by our prayers in his favour. And what of our own priest, or confessor? We are more intimately acquainted with them, we see and hear them often, we know their zeal and interest in our regard, and the care they take of us in many ways, both in health and in sickness. We should be very ungrateful, therefore, if we failed to recommend them to God, or to beg for them the graces they need in their onerous work: think, then, of them at this moment of grace.

c. Temporals blessing. These also we may lawfully ask of God, but always with the proviso that God sees good to bestow them. Hence, we must ask in resignation: "not my will, but thine be done." Success in a coming examination, or some business undertaking, better health than you have had in the past, recovery from sickness, and so on, of other similar wants.

d. Our neighbours. We are taught to pray not for ourselves only, but for all others. Thus our neighbours have a claim on us during the privileged time that follows Communion. They have their wants of soul and body like ourselves, and it is a spiritual work of mercy to help them therein by our petitions to God. Pray for prosperity and peace among them, for

conversions, for reconciliation where needed, for health, and success in their labours, just as we pray for our own.

e. The Souls in Purgatory. Never forget those that have gone before you, your parents or your children, your relatives or friends, those whom you may have injured in body or soul. They are helpless now in the names of Purgatory, and only our petitions in their behalf can bring them any relief. "Out of sight, out of mind" is a common saying, and too often a true one. But never let it be true of our departed ones. Ever bear them in mind and assist them by your suffrages, applying the Precious Blood of Jesus which you receive in Holy Communion to cool the ardour of the cleansing flames in which they are plunged. Then will God provide for you some day, and when your turn comes, others will bring you relief; mercy shall be given for mercy!

Behold here a goodly number of objects for which we may petition Our Blessed Lord after our Communion; some of them, at any rate, we should always lay before Him, for, according to the Saints, these moments are precious; let them not slip by in idleness and distraction, but ever employ them in earnest supplication.

Should anyone be able to make his thanksgiving after Communion without the aid of a book, as a rule his fervour will be more concentrated and heartfelt, and thus more efficacious. As a mnemonic, or aid to the memory, the four acts here developed may be recalled to mind through the first letters of each, which make up the word: A.C.T.S., namely, Adoration, Contrition, Thanks, and Supplication. To these add also one more:

5. *Oblation* As Our Lord has just given Himself to you, so now make your offering to Him. Present your whole being to Him to serve Him in the future. Your body with all its senses, and

your soul with all its faculties (Understanding, to think of Him, Memory, to be mindful of Him, Will, to be in harmony only with His); especially offer Him your good resolutions, your willingness to suffer for Him, and your readiness, if need were, to die for Him.

These are some of the chief acts we may make after Holy Communion, by way of Thanksgiving. It is not necessary we should always make them all, nor with such fullness of detail as has here been suggested. But never must we shirk the duty of some suitable return, which, strangely enough, is oftentimes found to be a difficulty, possibly for the want of some method in the making of it.

Don't imitate the lepers whose conduct has already been referred to, nor yet the example of that man whom Saint Philip Neri reproved for his neglect. The Saint one day, to his sorrow, noticed that a person who had just received Communion was getting up and going away. He at once told two altar boys to take a lighted taper each, and to accompany the person home. Surprised at this, the young man asked what it all meant, and, on the children referring him to Saint Philip, he went to inquire of the Saint, who said: "When the priest carries the Blessed Sacrament, he is always accompanied by two acolytes bearing lighted candles; the same honour, it seems to me, is due to anyone who carries It in his heart!" Recognizing his fault, the young man returned to church and made a due thanksgiving. How many nowadays might take this lesson to heart? A quarter of an hour after Communion is not too long to spend in praising and thanking Our Lord for the goodness and condescension He has shown us therein. Yet, how many, just after their Communion, hurry out of church with the rest of the congregation the moment Mass is over. They think five or six minutes quite enough for their thanksgiving to Jesus? Where is their faith? Where their gratitude, where their

appreciation of God's divinest guest? These must not be our models.

"Give glory to the God of Heaven, for His mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 135:26). "All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord, praise and exalt Him above all for ever" (Daniel 3:57).

## **Our Lord's Great Desire**

“He Himself more than once, and in no ambiguous terms, pointed out the necessity of eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood frequently.” These words are found in the early part of the famous decree of December 1905, in which the practice of frequent Communion is so strongly urged by Pius X on the Faithful of our day, and they may here serve as a text for some instruction on the desire of Our Lord to see His Sacrament of love more freely received, than has been the custom in the recent past, for the greater welfare of souls.

At the outset, we must remember that our Divine Saviour – being God, our Lord and Master – might, had it so pleased Him, have required of all of us, by positive command, the daily reception of Holy Communion, and we, as His creatures, would have been bound by every title to comply with His precept. In His infinite goodness, however, and with divine moderation, He never gave such a precept, for His Wisdom foresaw the difficulties that would stand in the way of His followers always being able to comply with it; sickness and ailing health would prevent many, distance from church would likewise be an obstacle, while the greater number of people have their daily work to attend to, and the livelihood of dependents to provide for, so that it would be morally impossible for them to approach daily to the Holy Table. Then again, the general spirit of the Gospel is not a spirit of coercion and force, but rather an appeal to the generosity and love of the Faithful.

At the same time, while a loving Master never laid upon His disciples the obligation of daily, or even of frequent Communion, we feel that such was His earnest wish and desire, as may be learnt from three distinct considerations.

## 1. The Matter of this Sacrament.

Our Lord, Creator of all things, and Lord of the universe, could have chosen any substance for the miracle of transubstantiation other than bread. He did not take an *attractive* substance for this purpose, such as a bright and brilliant flower, that might lead men to admire Him, and pay Him all their homage and adoration. Nor did He choose some permanent substance, as, for instance, a diamond, that by its hardness and solidity could scarcely be disposed of. What He did choose was something that could be *consumed* and eaten, thus clearly showing what His wish was, namely, to be received as spiritual food by men.

Then, when He did make His choice, it was no dainty that He fixed upon, no delicacy that would be difficult to procure, but a substance that was easily obtained, one of daily use, namely, bread. Common bread is not considered a treat; you do not offer a child a piece of bread as a reward of merit, but bread is for everyone, and for everyday use for all. In thus choosing bread for the miracle of transubstantiation, Our Lord would seem to show forth His desire that the spiritual food He was providing should be for all His followers, and for their use every day.

This may also be gathered by comparing the matter and the effects in the Sacraments; thus, water in the natural order serves to wash and cleanse, hence its use in Baptism, which is designed to purify the soul from the stain of original sin. So, in the Holy Eucharist, as bread feeds the body, it is the apt and appropriate matter for this Sacrament, and as bread is used daily in our physical life, so the Holy Eucharist should be received daily for the support of our spiritual life.

If further proof of this be necessary, it will be found in Our Lord's words, as given in Saint John's Gospel, 6:35,56: "I am

the bread of life," that is, the living bread come down from Heaven, of which He was discoursing with His apostles, Himself living, and giving life to the soul, life more vigorous and active in proportion as the soul receives Him more frequently, just as man's bodily life is the more strenuous, as he takes his food more regularly. Then again: "My flesh is meat indeed," that is for the life of man's soul; therefore must we receive it frequently as we do bodily food.

Thus does Our Saviour long to be united to His creatures, abiding in them, with a close and intimate union, of which Saint Cyril speaks thus: "If anyone pours more wax into a mass of melted wax, the two must necessarily mix and become one. So, he that receives the Body and Blood of the Lord must also be so joined to Him, that Christ will be found in Him and he in Christ."

To enforce these teachings and bring them home to all, the Catechism of the Council of Trent observes: "It is part of the duty of the parish priest frequently to exhort the Faithful not to neglect the nourishment and support of their souls, even as they deem it needful to give material nourishment to their bodies; for it is evident that the soul has no less need of spiritual food than the body has of material."

When we speak of taking food and nourishment, we imply the idea of a daily act, as is found everywhere and at every period of life; the human system requires this much, to repair and preserve its vigour, and to provide against the exhaustion of its strength. What is true of the physical life, holds also for the spiritual, for which Our Lord in His Sacrament so earnestly yearns to provide. The very matter He chose for it shows the longing desire of His heart for its frequent reception.

## 2. The Manna, a Type.



This subject has already been dealt with at some length in the chapter on Types and Figures of the Holy Eucharist. It is referred to here again only as an argument to show that Our Lord, who spoke of it to His apostles, Himself used it to imply that we should frequently, and even daily, receive Holy Communion.

It is not a mere comparison we make between the manna and the Blessed Sacrament; but the manna is truly a type, and a chief one, of the Eucharist, proclaiming the nature and the effects of the marvellous gift God was in due time to bestow upon men.

Our Lord illustrated His discourse on the Blessed Sacrament by allusion to the manna. This was the daily food of the Hebrews in the desert; without it, they would have died of hunger and exhaustion. What is the inference? That the Blessed Sacrament, the food of our soul, must be received as food, that is, regularly and as required, otherwise the soul will die the death of sin.

But the love of the Sacred Heart extends much further than this: Its burning desire is that we should go frequently, very frequently to receive this heavenly manna. For, reminding the Jews how their forefathers in the Desert of Sin partook daily of the bread that fell from the heavens, for the support of their bodies, Our Saviour argued and implied that His Flesh and Blood, the true Bread from Heaven, should likewise be received every day by men for the life of their souls, in the desert of this world through which they are passing.

The early Christians did indeed carry out this behest of Our Lord, and such was their piety that numbers among them received Holy Communion every day, and this was their practice for many generations. Their fervour, however,

cooled down and the salutary habit fell into disuse. The present Pontiff, Pius X, has endeavoured, and with great success, to revive it among the Faithful, and once more we are urged to approach the Holy Table every morning, before entering on the day's work, with all its distractions and temptations and dangers.

The Jews, who through indifference failed to gather the manna day by day, brought their own punishment on themselves, for they lacked vigour and strength of body in consequence. If, then, we abstain from frequent Communion, through sloth or tepidity, we too shall experience exhaustion of the spiritual strength of our souls. Knowing this, Our Lord's great desire is that we approach even daily to the Holy Table.

### 3. Petition in the Lord's Prayer.

The fourth petition of the "Our Father" is: "Give us this day our daily bread," as to which the papal decree says: "The holy Fathers of the Church all but unanimously teach that by these words must be understood not so much that material bread which is the support of the body, as the Eucharistic bread which ought to be our daily food."

Though some of the Fathers, whose writings constitute the tradition of the Church on this matter, hold that the petition refers *chiefly* to the Holy Eucharist, yet others say *exclusively*, which seems to be the more common opinion.

All the petitions of the Lord's Prayer refer to the supernatural life of the soul in some way or other; thus, the prayer that God may be known and praised by His creatures is true zeal that makes our souls more holy; the petition that God's kingdom may spread upon the earth is another expression of that same zeal, and so of the rest that concern the Christian

as such. Now, it would seem inappropriate and out of keeping with the rest of the prayer that this fourth petition should refer chiefly to the bread that feeds the body; all the others are of the supernatural order, and this one alone would then be of the lower rank.

Often, in the Gospels, does Our Lord warn against over-anxiety about the concerns of the body: “Be not solicitous for your life what you shall eat, nor for your body what you shall put on. . . . Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:25,33). “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you” (John 6:27).

After such admonitions, it would seem inconsistent that Our Lord should bid us daily ask for bodily food (our daily bread), whilst urging no such prayer for the infinitely more precious food of the soul! Hence, “daily bread” clearly means the Holy Eucharist. Behold in this His own prayer, the ardent desire of Jesus Christ that we should daily receive Him as our soul’s food. The practice of the early Church and the earnest recommendation of daily Communion by Pius X. are a manifest interpretation of Our Lord’s words: “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Saint Hilary says: “Our Saviour has such a desire to dwell within us, returning to us day by day, that He commands us to ask for it in our daily prayer.” And Saint Ambrose: “If this bread be ‘daily,’ why do you partake of it less frequently?”

Here then we have three considerations which seem to show us the longing desire of Our Lord to see us approach the Holy Table frequently, even daily, to receive Him, namely: the fact of His choosing bread, the daily food of our bodies, as the matter of the most Holy Eucharist; then, the pointed

reference He makes to the manna, as the daily food of the Jews in the wilderness and type of this Eucharistic food; lastly, the petition in the prayer He Himself taught us, interpreted as chiefly, if not exclusively, referring to the spiritual food of our souls to be received by us daily.

Our Lord, in one of His instructions, once said: "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?" (Luke 12:49). Similarly, if He offers us daily on the Altar the supernatural food of the soul, surely it is His ardent wish that we should daily partake of it. This is the normal measure in which He would desire us to use the generous gift He has left us. And if there be many who, for various causes, cannot partake of it daily, it must surely be His will that they should at least receive it frequently.

Be it therefore our endeavour now to approach more often than perhaps we have hitherto done, nay, as often as we can, this heavenly banquet of Holy Communion. We have seen how greatly Our Lord desires this, and we also know how His Vicar on earth has endeavoured to revive the ancient practice of the Church, daily Communion, if possible. With these considerations before our minds, we shall fail in loyalty to Our Lord and the Holy Father, as also to the best interests of our souls, if, through indifference or any unworthy motive, we neglect such an abundant source of grace, such a powerful aid to the spiritual life. The next chapter will deal more fully with this matter.

## Frequent Communion

It is a well-authenticated fact in ecclesiastical history, which has been already stated, that the Christians in the early ages of the Church were accustomed, when assisting at the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, or when hearing Mass, as we should say nowadays, always to approach the Altar and receive Holy Communion. As many were present every day at the Sacred Rites, their Communion also was daily. This devout practice has ever had the approval of the Church, who desires nothing more than to see her children go frequently, and even daily, to receive their Sacramental Lord. Many times has she given expression to this wish by the voice of her Pontiffs, and the decrees of her Councils, in particular the Council of Trent, where we read: "This holy Synod would desire that at every Mass, the Faithful who are present should communicate, not only spiritually, by way of internal affection, but sacramentally, by actual reception of the Eucharist" (Sess. XXII., c. 6). From this passage it is clear how strongly the Church desires to see the practice of frequent Communion flourish among the Faithful.

But the errors of Luther and the Reformers were already spreading quickly over Europe, in the early part of the sixteenth century, during which the famous Council of Trent was held. These false teachings had naturally a most injurious effect on the fervour and devotion of many in the Church, while also countless numbers were detached for ever from her allegiance. Temporal disturbances, in the form of wars, national rivalries and the pursuit of purely secular interests, combined with the subversive influences of the Reformation to chill all fervour and make the practice of Religion difficult and irksome. Thus it was that the voice of the Church on frequent Communion fell unheeded on the

ears of most of her children, while the practice of it failed to be realized. In the difficult times that followed, especially here in our own country, where the old Faith came to be proscribed and persecuted, it was most difficult to practice even the ordinary duties of Christian obligation, and impossible in the case of mere matters of devotion.

Early in the seventeenth century, the plague of Jansenism spread its ravages in the Church. This heresy, among other evils, kept souls away from Communion, on the pretext of the high degree of holiness and piety required for its worthy reception; to such an extent was this exacted, that they became afraid to approach the Sacraments at all; the Altars were deserted, and even at Easter time, or in the very hour of death, some, through false reverence, refused to receive Holy Communion! Jansenism was, of course, opposed and condemned by the Church, yet even so, its deadly influence upon souls remained for many long years after.

In more recent times, however, thanks be to God, a reaction began to set in against such excessive severity in regard to the reception of the Sacraments, and in the middle of last century, the saintly Pontiff, Pius IX, who then ruled the Church, reprobated the neglect of Holy Communion, even in children, and endeavoured to restore the ancient spirit and discipline on the subject of its frequent reception. In these efforts he was in no small degree aided by a blind prelate, of great holiness of life and earnest zeal in the cause, Monsignor de Segur, of Paris. This apostle of the Eucharist used to gather round him the young men of the gay city, and instilled into their hearts deep love for the Blessed Sacrament, urging them to frequent Communion, as the great means of preserving their virtue amid the allurements and temptations that surrounded their daily lives. By his writings also, Monsignor de Segur propagated these same views and exhortations, while in the many retreats and

conferences he gave throughout the year, he spoke on the subject with an eloquence and force that appealed intensely to the hearts of his hearers. The writer well remembers some of these discourses and the practical effects they produced. Thus gradually the custom of more frequent Communion began to spread once again among the Faithful in France, who were drawn in large numbers to the Holy Table.

During the reign of the late Leo XIII, of happy memory, Eucharistic Congresses began to be held in different parts of the world, in order to spread the knowledge of the Church's teaching on the sublime mystery of the Altar, and to promote love, reverence and devotion to It in every form, especially by Its more frequent reception. It will be fresh in the minds of all of us how great was the enthusiasm and piety of the Faithful of these islands, shown on the occasion of the nineteenth Congress, held in 1908, in the Cathedral of Westminster.

All these manifestations of popular devotion, and the approval that such gatherings received from Rome, made it clear that the old spirit was reviving, though many indeed still adhered to the common custom of communicating only seldom, while theologians continued to wrangle and discuss with some heat, as to what conditions were necessary for receiving the Holy Eucharist; these were remains of the old Jansenistic spirit that caused no little trouble of conscience to pious souls, with the result that "distinguished men, themselves pastors of souls," were at length moved to petition the Holy See to settle such doubts, and set all discussions at rest, by some authoritative pronouncement on the matter.

In the month of February 1905 there was published to the world, indulgenced by Pius X, a prayer for the spread of the practice of daily Communion among the Faithful, which

seemed, as it were, to foreshadow some important act of the Roman Court to follow; and so indeed it proved to be, for in the December of that same year there appeared the epoch-making decree of Pius X, urging upon the universal Church the practice of frequent and even daily Communion.

This decree recalls the teaching of the Council of Trent, already mentioned, and then authoritatively states the purpose of the Eucharist, which Our Lord had in mind when instituting It. "The desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church, that all the Faithful should daily approach the sacred banquet, is directed chiefly to this end, that the Faithful, being united to God by means of the Sacrament, may thence derive strength to resist their sensual faults, and to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty is liable; so that its primary purpose is not that the honour and reverence due to Our Lord may be safeguarded, or that the Sacrament may serve as a reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients. Hence the holy Council of Trent calls the Eucharist 'the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults, and preserved from deadly sins.'"

In connection with these words, we may quote the axiom ascribed to Saint Augustine: *Sacramenta propter homines*, "the Sacraments are made for men." This is the root-principle ever to be borne in mind, when dealing with the question of frequent and daily Communion. Thus it is not reverence for the Holy Eucharist we must consider as holding the foremost place, and claiming our first attention; we are not made for the Sacrament, but the Sacrament was instituted for us; the spiritual good of our souls is the primary consideration, in reference to the frequency with which we should approach to receive It.

It is not that the Decree urges us to discount the reverence due to so great a gift: God forbid! It merely tells us how best



to show it. Saint Ambrose reminds us that reverence is shown, not by refusing to approach Our Lord in Holy Communion, but by going frequently to receive Him, and from Him to obtain the many graces our souls require.

Surely Our Lord knows better than we can, what sanctity and reverence are due to Him in His Sacrament. Yet He wills His Flesh and Blood to be received for the healing of the wounds of our souls, despite our imperfections and venial sins, and in the prayer He taught to men, He bids us ask for that “daily bread,” which our souls need as their spiritual food, quite as much as for the daily sustenance we require for our bodies.

Had reverence been Our Lord’s primary idea in the work of Redemption, He would never have humbled Himself to the lowliness of the Crib in Bethlehem, nor to the indignity of the death on Calvary! It was the welfare and salvation of souls that held the first place in His conception of the Redemption, hence the excess of suffering and insult He was willing to bear. If we refuse His loving invitation to receive Him at the Altar, because of our unworthiness, we are like a cripple who would object to use a good walking-stick offered by a friend, on the plea that to use it would be to soil it with the mud of the roadside, and who would therefore hang it on the wall, to keep it neat and clean. True regard for his friend would make him use the stick, and true reverence for Our Lord’s gracious Gift would lead us to go and receive it. The reluctance felt by so many to follow the counsel laid down in this Decree may in part be due to the long established custom of going but seldom to Holy Communion, from which it is hard to break away, but it is also owing to a misconception of the primary object for which the Holy Eucharist is given, namely, our soul’s welfare, and to our imperfect appreciation of the loving mystery of the Incarnation.

The only *conditions necessary* for frequent, nay even daily, Communion are laid down in these words of the Decree itself: "Frequent and daily Communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ Our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the Faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life; so that no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention, can lawfully be hindered therefrom."

Thus, *firstly*, the state of grace is necessary, for the Holy Eucharist is one of the Sacraments of the living, that is, It requires and presupposes the life of grace in those who approach to receive It; for, to eat of this Bread of Life with our souls in the state of death by mortal sin would be a grievous sacrilege, a subject that must occupy our attention later on. But this freedom from mortal sin is a very different matter from freedom from all venial sin. If, then, we are not conscious to ourselves of any grievous sin in our souls, we have the first essential condition for approaching the Holy Table, even day by day, for then there is no obstacle to the streams of heavenly grace which the Sacrament can and will pour into them.

The *second* condition is that we receive "with a right and devout intention," that is, with any good and virtuous motive; such would be: to give glory to God for His Divine perfections, to make reparation for the insults committed against Him by men, to seek His grace and blessing on our souls, on the Church and her Head, the Vicar of Christ, to ask the conversion of sinners, or even to beg for some temporal favour, should God see good to grant it. Such, and others of the kind, would be "right and devout intentions," justifying our receiving Holy Communion as frequently as we can: they quite come within the terms of the Decree.

The text goes on to give an example or two of what would not be a right intention; for instance:

*Routine*, which cannot mean the simple practice of going often to Communion, for otherwise all habits of virtue would be inadvisable, because they lead us to do acts easily. Guilty routine would be to go without any sort of reverence in mind or body, a mere mechanical act, a sheep-like performance on the part of the communicant.

*Vainglory*: going to the Altar for the sake of being thought good and pious, or with the silly idea of showing off a new hat, etc., or of attracting attention to oneself in any way.

*Human Respect*: for instance, solely to please others, or to avoid criticism, in case we did not go.

These defects, while, they do not make our Communions bad, nor absolutely prevent our receiving some grace from them, tend very much to diminish the great benefits the Sacrament is calculated to produce in us. We must endeavour, therefore, to avoid such faults and blemishes, and receive It “for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this Divine Remedy for our weaknesses and defects.”

There are other dispositions that would help to make our Communion more worthy and profitable, and the Decree refers also to them; these have been dealt with under the subject of preparation and thanksgiving. Suffice it to repeat here that only two conditions are really necessary for even daily Communion: the state of grace and a right intention; given these, every Communion we make is bound to produce good fruit in our souls.

Such, then, is the recent Decree on the subject of Frequent and Daily Communion, by which the Holy Father seeks to

recall the practice of the early Christians, and to revive what has always been the wish of the Church in regard to this important matter. Nor need we be surprised at his endeavours, when we remember the wonderful graces and fruitful results the Holy Communion can produce in us, some of which were enumerated in a preceding chapter. Truly, one good Communion is enough to make us saints!

Old customs, however, die hard, so too does prejudice. Hence it is that, although Frequent Communion has greatly increased these few years past, it is not by any means general among the Faithful, still less so is Daily Communion. It would seem, then, in this case as in so many others, the only effective way of reintroducing the practice is to begin with the young, with the children who have once made their first Communion. The Decree refers to children as well as to adults: “*All the Faithful of whatever rank and condition.*” When doubts were submitted to the Holy See on this very point, the reply given was that the Decree included children also, who, having made their first Communion, are to be exhorted and urged to its frequent and daily reception, just like their elders. When such children have been well trained in their early years, they will maintain the good practice as they grow up, and in the course of a generation or two, we may hope that it will be really widespread among the Faithful, to the personal benefit of their individual souls, and also to the general welfare of Society.

With the best of good will, however, there must always remain a proportion of the Faithful, who, for one cause or another, will find it impossible to carry out to the letter the advice contained in this Decree. Some have not the time: the duties of their state and their occupations in life prevent them going to Church during the week, and so daily Communion at any rate is really beyond their reach. Others again, from ill health or general debility, are quite unable to

go out fasting in the morning. If this be so, there is no more to say, except that it is a misfortune for such to be thus deprived of many graces that they would otherwise receive. Let them, if they cannot accept the letter of the Decree, at least endeavour to follow its spirit, and go as often as they can to the Altar.

In the third book of Kings, we read of an incident in the life of Elias that suggests a figure of the benefits of Frequent Communion. Queen Jezabel threatened him with death, in revenge for his having slain some of her false prophets. "Then Elias was afraid, and rising up, he went whithersoever he had a mind; and he came to Bersabee of Juda and left his servants there. And he went forward one day's journey into the desert. And when he was there, and sat under a juniper tree, he requested for his soul that he might die, and said: It is enough for me, Lord, take away my soul: for I am no better than my fathers. And he cast himself down, and slept in the shadow of the juniper tree; and behold an angel of the Lord touched him, and said to him: arise and eat. He looked, and behold there was at his head a hearth-cake and a vessel of water; and he eat and drank, and he fell asleep again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him and said to him: Arise, eat; for thou hast yet a great way to go. And he arose and eat and drank, and walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights, unto the mount of God, Horeb" (3 Kings 19:3-8).

This food that the prophet partook of saved him from the death of hunger and fatigue, enabled him to escape from his arch-enemy, Jezabel, and helped him safely on the long journey to Mount Horeb, a figure of Heaven, where he found peace and rest. It suggests the thought of frequent Communion, from the angel's telling him a second time to eat of that bread.

In the Holy Eucharist we have the food that will strengthen us on the journey to eternity, and if we partake of it again and again, it will save us from falling by the way and enable us to escape our spiritual foes, Satan with his temptations, which, experience tells us, are to be found on every side, and at length we shall reach the land of peace and rest, our eternal rest with God in Heaven.

“On the usual conditions” are words that are familiar to all, inasmuch as they are often heard from the Altar, on a Sunday morning, when the announcement is made that a plenary indulgence may be gained on some feast day in the coming week. These conditions have always been Confession, Communion, and Prayer for the Pope’s Intentions, though, as regards the first of these, Confession once a week is sufficient to enable one to gain several plenary indulgences during the course of that week, though a separate Communion is necessary for each day on which we wish to gain a plenary indulgence.

Now, after the promulgation of the Decree on Frequent Communion, a further one followed, under date of 14th February 1906, which relaxes the condition of weekly Confession, in favour of those who make their Communion daily, or, say, five times a week, and allows them to gain all the indulgences within the fortnight, while going to Confession only once in the fortnight. This is not to be taken as implying that they are to neglect weekly Confession. The Sacraments, it is true, work their beneficent effects in our souls by their own inherent power, if worthily received; yet, better effects will follow, in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are more perfect; hence the soul is better prepared for Holy Communion by the weekly Confession.

But in consequence of this second Decree, it may be feared that some are going less frequently to Confession now than

they used to do, though they are by no means daily communicants, perhaps only weekly ones at most. This is a quite unintended result which should not be encouraged, and those who act thus must clearly know they are unable to gain the indulgences of the full fortnight under the fortnightly Confession only; this privilege is granted exclusively to those who approach the Holy Table daily, or almost daily.

# Spiritual Communion

This would seem to be the natural place in which to say a word on the subject of Spiritual Communion, or, Communion of the Angels, as it has been called.

In spite of all that has been said on the matter of the frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist, it must be recognized and freely admitted that for large numbers of the Faithful it is quite impossible. Their daily avocations prevent many of them from getting to church on week days, while many also do not feel the courage or the desire to go often to Holy Communion. To all these and to others who, from whatever cause, do not go to the Holy Table, the practice of Spiritual Communion may be recommended, as used by the Saints and approved by the Church. "Those who eat in desire this heavenly bread are, by a lively faith that worketh by charity, made sensible of the fruit and usefulness thereof" (Cl. Trent., XIII. 8).

Spiritual Communion consists chiefly in a yearning desire to receive our Blessed Lord, with expressions of regret at not being able to actually do so, in making acts of sorrow for sin, together with gratitude for God's mercies and petition for His graces, in the same way almost as if we had really been able to receive Him into our hearts.

Such Communion may be made at any time or place; we know that Our Lord, while on earth, healed not only those who presented themselves before Him, but those also who were at a distance, but ardently desired His presence. Remember the instance of the Centurion's servant, as related in Saint Matthew's Gospel, 8:8: and also that of the Ruler's son (John 4:50). Without then actually entering our



hearts by Sacramental Communion, Our Lord can and will bless us, if we make only a Spiritual Communion.

The most natural and suitable time for this would be during Mass, when the priest makes his Sacramental Communion, or while the Faithful go up to the Altar for theirs; we shall be better able then to excite within us the best dispositions for making it well. If carefully and fervently done, such Spiritual Communion may be made to supply the omission of Sacramental Communion. It has ever been held in esteem by Saints and holy persons, who extol the happy effects it produces in the soul, while Our Lord Himself has more than once shown the pleasure it gives Him. He one day appeared to a holy nun who dwelt in Naples, holding two vessels in His hands, the one of gold, and the other of silver. As she was wondering what this could mean, Jesus said to her: "My child, I keep in the golden vessel all your Sacramental Communions, and in the silver one all your Spiritual Communions." On another occasion, He told Saint Jane of the Cross, that as often as she made a Spiritual Communion, she received a grace similar to that which she received when making a Sacramental Communion.

When, therefore, we do not approach the Altar during Mass, and even when we are not able to be present at Mass at all, we should make at least a Spiritual Communion in the manner here given. There is no need to be fasting for this purpose, nor is a Confessors leave in any way necessary. Then, like many others who have benefited by the practice, we shall reap much profit from it, and enrich our souls with many precious graces.

# **Sacrilegious Communion**

That food may be beneficial to the body, the body must necessarily be living, for food cannot avail the dead. So with regard to the spiritual food of Holy Communion: it is only the soul that enjoys the supernatural life in God through Divine grace that can draw profit from the reception of the Holy Eucharist. In other words, to receive worthily, the soul must be in the state of grace; the absence of this wedding garment renders the soul unfit and unworthy to approach the Adorable Sacrament. Yet we know that Christians are sometimes found who do not hesitate to go to the Holy Table, their souls defiled with mortal sin, thus making a bad Communion, and rendering themselves guilty of sacrilege in so doing.

The unworthy communicant acts like the Philistines, who took possession of the Ark of the Covenant, and placed it near their false god, Dagon, for he introduces his Eucharistic God into a soul where Satan himself holds sway.

To turn a church into a stable, as the first Napoleon is said to have done during his military campaigns, would be a desecration before God and man. So, too, was the act of Baltassar, King of Babylon, in sending for the sacred vessels of the Temple, and turning them to profane use, by drinking from them to the honour of his gods (Daniel 5). What, then, must be the guilt of one who introduces Our Lord into his soul, when plunged in the mire of grievous sin, profaning thus the great Sacrament of Sacraments! No greater crime can be conceived, no greater insult can be offered than this sacrilege of deepest dye, bringing the infinite Sanctity of God into contact with the corruption of a soul in mortal sin.

It is like tying a living body to a putrid corpse, as was sometimes done with the Martyrs.

The usual cause of a bad Communion is the making of a bad Confession beforehand, by concealing a sin through false shame and fear in declaring some sin, or through want of true contrition, or again through carelessness in examining one's conscience, which leads to the omission of some grievous sin that would have come to light in an examination of conscience properly made. This shows the importance of a previous good Confession, for if the Confession be faulty and sacrilegious, so too will be the Communion that follows.

This great evil may sometimes arise also from a sort of human respect, which impels one to go to Holy Communion after breaking one's fast. This may perhaps happen in the case of children; having prepared themselves well for their Communion the night before, they accidentally break their fast the next morning, and then, through false shame, or through human respect, are afraid to abstain from going to the Altar, which their parents or companions know they intended to do; thus are they led to make a bad Communion. Such as these must remember the weighty law of the Church, that Communion must be received fasting, apart the exceptions we have already considered. Should they happen to break their fast, there is no help for it but to abstain from Holy Communion that day; let them proclaim boldly the cause of this, and then prepare to receive another day. On no account must they go to the Altar in such circumstances, and so commit a grievous sin.

Judas was the first bad communicant, who on the very night of Our Lord's institution of the Holy Eucharist, having planned in his heart to betray his Divine Master to His enemies, yet dared to receive Him in such unworthy

dispositions, and “Satan entered into him” (John 13:27). Since his day, alas! many have done, and still do, in like manner, receiving Holy Communion unworthily, and committing a grievous sacrilege; better far to make no Communion at all than to make a bad one. To do this is to turn the food of the soul, so calculated to raise it to the heights of sanctity, into a deadly poison that kills the soul in the eyes of God. Holy Communion is like the light of day, salutary to the healthy eye, but hurtful to one that is diseased; Our Lord’s Body is a medicine, giving health to the pure of heart, but spiritual death to the unclean.

The consequences of a bad Communion are expressed in the words of Saint Paul (1 Corinthians 11:29): eating and drinking judgment to oneself, that is to say, the sinner entails damnation on himself, in punishment for not discerning the Body of the Lord, and treating It with no more respect than he would treat common bread.

1. God has ever punished sacrilege with marked severity and indignation; His punishments for this are oftentimes of the temporal order and more terrible than for any other kind of sin. Even in the days of S. Paul we find sacrilegious Communion among the Faithful, and he tells the Corinthians that in consequence thereof many among them were afflicted with divers ailments and diseases, while many, too, were punished with premature death (1 Corinthians 11:30). “Durandus says that for many years in Rome there were so many sudden deaths about Easter that the public attention was drawn to it, especially as there seemed no reason in the ordinary course of things why the average should be so greatly exceeded always at the occurrence of that movable feast. At length the Pope received some light by which he was led to infer that this annual visitation of sudden deaths was in consequence of the number of sacrilegious Communion made by those fulfilling the Easter

precept." Even to this day one of the breviary hymns for Paschal time contains a verse recalling this fact, and begging God to spare His people: *Ut sis perenne mentibus*.

Jesus, that Thou to our poor hearts  
May'st e'er true Paschal joy remain,  
From evil death, deserved by crime,  
Free us, to life now born again."

Anyone who despises the law and refuses to obey offends the king and gives him displeasure. But if he advance still further and maltreats the king himself, then he commits a more grievous crime and is guilty of high treason. This is exactly what is done by one who receives Communion in the state of sin. If he disobey the Divine commands, he offends and dishonours God; but if he have the temerity to receive Our Lord with mortal sin in his soul, then he not only offends God, but directly maltreats His Divine Son, and commits the awful crime of high treason against Him. No wonder that God Almighty punishes such sin with severity!

2. Bad Communions more than anything else tend to harden the heart, and as it were to sear it over, as sealing-wax is spread over the paper. The grace of God makes no impression on the soul and can hardly effect an entrance; hence the great difficulty of repentance and conversion which they experience who are thus guilty, hence too the danger they expose themselves to of dying in their sin. A band of robbers numbered among them a young man, as yet timid, whose sense of virtue had not been quite stifled. "Go and make bad Communions," said the Captain, "and you will no longer fear!" Unfortunately, the young man followed this diabolical advice, and soon found how true it is that sacrilege hardens the heart, for he became in time the most desperate of a desperate lot.

In one of the towns bordering on the Rhine there lived a man who had given himself up to every passion, and had become by his life a scandal to all who knew him. Being at length on his deathbed, his family, who were good Catholics, sent for the priest, who heard the sick man's confession, and prepared to give him Holy Viaticum. He already held the Blessed Sacrament in his hand, when the patient cried out: "Stop, father, stop! I made a sacrilegious first Communion, and have never been to Communion since. One surely is sufficient to suffer for in hell for eternity." In vain did the priest and the bystanders, struck with horror, exhort him to repentance and remind him of the infinite mercy of God, who is ever ready to pardon the repenting sinner. He sank into the depths of despair and died miserably.

3. Furthermore, sacrilegious Communions lead to great remorse of conscience and to unhappiness, which goad the guilty to every sort of crime. When a sinner reflects on his crime, he feels oppressed in heart and realizes the weight of sin that lies on his conscience; then, losing his peace of mind, he is ready to do any evil that may present itself to his thoughts.

The example of the unhappy Judas will be handed down to all time. After making his bad Communion, and then selling his Lord into the hands of His enemies, filled with the bitterness of remorse, he went forth and hanged himself with a halter (Matthew 27:5).

The famous Goethe writes a magnificent page on the beauty and power of the Sacraments of the Church; then he declares that a bad Communion made him leave the Church to embrace Protestantism, for he thought, as Saint Paul says, he had eaten his own condemnation, and he strove thus to stifle remorse. Full of gloom, fear, and despair, he wrote a

wicked book that has caused innumerable suicides. Thus did sacrilege become the poisoned source of many evils.

Among the signs of predestination given by the Fathers of the Church, one is that we know how to draw good out of evil, and turn to the advantage of our souls even the very sins we may have committed, as the bee draws sweetness from bitter flowers. "To them that love God all things work together unto good" (Romans 8:28). On the other hand, it is a sign of damnation to draw evil out of good and convert into deadly poison that food which should naturally give us life, as they do who communicate unworthily. Instead of reaping benefit from so great a Sacrament, they do but draw down upon themselves the malediction and vengeance of God.

What then must we do to avoid so great a crime and escape the chastisements it often brings? If we cannot attain to the highest dispositions that will make our Communion so worthy and fruitful, at least must we have the elementary and essential disposition of being in the state of grace; to this add humble preparation and thanksgiving, then the Eucharistic Bread will always prove to be the bread of eternal life to our souls.

# Conclusion

By way of conclusion to this first part of our subject – the Holy Eucharist considered as a Sacrament – it may be well to add to what has been already said a few practical lessons and considerations.

1. The Blessed Sacrament has been termed the “abridgment of the wonders of God.” It is the centre to which everything in the body of the Church tends, to which all the other Sacraments refer, just as everything in the human body centres in the heart; it is the mystery which gives life to the social community, directed to the bringing back of the universe to God. For all creatures strive towards perfection, but they lose their own individuality in so doing; thus, earth, air, and water lose their individual existence, when assimilated as food by plants and trees of the vegetative world, a higher and more perfect form of being than the inorganic, to which the former belong. Vegetation, in its turn, is lost in the life of animals which it subserves; while both vegetative and animal life is absorbed by man, for his food, clothing, and general comfort. Then lastly man himself is assimilated to God, who imparts to him His own Divine life in Holy Communion, so that he truly says with Saint Paul: “I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). Thus is the Holy Eucharist the centre to which all things tend, it is in the moral world what the sun is in the physical, drawing all things to itself, diffusing spiritual life and fruitfulness throughout the Church.

2. The Fathers call the Eucharist also an “Extension of the Incarnation.” For in that mystery Our Lord united Himself to only one body and one soul, but in the Holy Eucharist He unites Himself to the body and soul of each one who



receives Him. This union of God and man by Holy Communion is likened to a piece of red-hot iron, assuming all the qualities of fire, without losing its own nature, and to food, which is daily changed into the substance of our body by digestion. Thus Holy Communion makes each one of us another Jesus Christ, "in whom the Father is well pleased," thus extending the mystery and work of the Incarnation.

3. In reference to Society at large, the Holy Eucharist is what the sun is to the universe, what the heart is to the body. Take away the sun, and the physical world would crumble to pieces in darkness and arctic cold. Take away the heart, and life succumbs and is lost. So, too, would it be in Church, did the Holy Eucharist cease to be her treasure. For, in it the Church finds her vigour and strength; by it the Christian Religion is ever strong and flourishing; and for it Divine worship displays its grandeur and magnificence, all which exercises an influence and power on the well-being of human Society.

4. The Holy Eucharist is the principle of the miracles of charity and self-sacrifice, of which the annals of the Church open out to our gaze so many noble examples. We see Saint Charles Borromeo carrying comfort and consolation to the plague-stricken in the streets of Milan, fearless as to personal inconvenience and danger, because inflamed through Holy Communion with burning love for the souls and bodies of the stricken ones. Saint Francis of Sales, in like manner, sacrificed everything, and would have laid down his life, in his zeal for the salvation of the heretics among whom his lot was cast. In recent times, Father Damien, the leper martyr of Charity, sacrificed everything – home, friends, comforts, and even life – for his stricken neighbour. So also the Religious of both sexes have ever devoted their means, their time, and their very lives to the welfare, spiritual and temporal, of their fellow-beings, suffering from all the

miseries that human flesh is heir to, because their souls were inflamed with love for God and man, in the daily reception of the Bread of Life. Thus, too, will it be with us, if we, like them, go often to the same Holy Table.

Where love of the Holy Eucharist grows cold, true Charity becomes extinct; then selfishness or cold philanthropy come to take its place, thinking much of the bodily wants of the poor, as we so often see at the present time – an excellent thing in itself, a corporal work of mercy – but without any thought for the higher happiness of the victims, without raising their thoughts to God and eternity, and so, failing in the first essential towards true peace and happiness, the idea of God and of resignation to His Divine Will.

May God grant that the present-day return to the salutary practice of frequent Communion may multiply wonders of charity and love, tending to the temporal benefit and social welfare of men in this world, but at the same time raise their souls to the heights of spiritual perfection, and fit them for closer union with God in the next.

# **The Holy Eucharist as a Sacrifice**

# On Sacrifice

We have not yet exhausted the sublime riches of the Holy Eucharist, and have still further truths to study in regard to it. For, as was stated in an earlier part of these *Instructions*, the Holy Eucharist is not only a Sacrament, it is also a Sacrifice. It is as a Sacrament we have dealt with it so far, as a means for sanctifying and perfecting man's soul; we have still to examine it as a Sacrifice, whereby we are enabled to offer to God the homage which the creature owes to the Creator. Before treating of the Eucharist under this second aspect, it may be well, or even necessary, to study the nature of Sacrifice in general.

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For a complete yet simple definition of Sacrifice, we cannot do better than take the one given in the penny Catechism, thus worded: "Sacrifice is the offering of a victim by a priest to God alone, in testimony of His being the sovereign Lord of all things." This definition may be amplified and explained in some detail, as follows:

*Offering of a Victim* – Men are bound, as rational beings, to offer to God the homage and adoration of their hearts; and sacrifice has, from the beginning, been required by God Himself as the one means by which they were to express to Him that homage in its most perfect form. For sacrifice, in the strict sense of the word, a victim is necessary, that is, some external creature to whom God has given being, which creature must be really or equivalently destroyed, to testify before God that we deserve destruction at His hands, on account of the sins we have committed before Him, and to worship His Divine power over life and death. Having no right to inflict self-destruction, man immolates and offers to his God a creature instead. Thus it is that prayer, though

sometimes called a sacrifice, is not one in strict reality, inasmuch as it is not a creature receiving its being from God, it is not a visible oblation, it is not a victim.

*By a Priest* – A priest duly ordained alone has the right and the power to offer sacrifice, for it is a public act of Religion, requiring a lawful minister to perform it; anyone else attempting to do so, would be guilty of sin in the sight of God. In the Old Testament, we read how King Saul displeased God by undertaking to offer sacrifice. Saul was surrounded by enemies, while his own followers were slipping away from him; in these straits, he undertook to offer sacrifice, as the prophet Samuel tarried on the way and had not come, as agreed upon. But hardly was the sacrifice completed, when Samuel arrived, and learning what had been done, he reproved the king in God's name, and warned him that, as a punishment, his kingdom should not continue, but should be given to another, to a man according to God's own heart (I Kings 13).

A priest is especially set apart for the very purpose of offering sacrifice, which is the chief duty of his office, for priest and sacrifice are correlative terms, like the words father and son. A man may be an excellent husband, a very good citizen, a model in every way, but he cannot be called a father, unless he have offspring; one implies the other; so, in regard to priest and sacrifice. Saint Paul reminds us that "every high priest ... is ordained . . . that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins . . . first for his own sins, then for the people's" (Hebrews 5:1; 7:27). Sacrifice can be offered only by one appointed for the purpose.

Here it may be restated that the sacrifice is truly and validly offered, whether it be done by saint or sinner, whether by Peter or by Judas; for the validity does not depend on the state of soul in him who offers it, but it is an exercise of the

power of Orders, which being granted is all that is needed, if only the rite itself be duly carried out. Unless this power exist in the offerer of the Sacrifice of the New Law, there is no sacrifice. Hence, in the Anglican Church, there is no sacrifice; for they do not possess the power of Orders. Anglican ordinations, after a long and exhaustive inquiry, were rejected as invalid by the late Pope Leo XIII in 1896. As, then, they have no priesthood, so they have no sacrifice, for one goes with the other; if one fails, they both fail.

In the Old Law, the priesthood descended from father to son, and remained in certain families only. It was typical of the more perfect and more sublime priesthood of the New Law, which does not remain the privilege of individual families, but candidates for the signal honour are called of God separately and individually; this Call is known as a Vocation. Should parents perceive in their young boy any signs of a vocation to the priesthood, they should deem themselves highly favoured by Heaven, and do all they can to nurture and assist it, by keeping the child out of the way of evil and danger, encouraging him in his exercises of piety, and helping him, so far as their means may allow, to obtain a good Catholic education. They would do well to speak to their parish priest of their hopes and convictions; he will be able to advise them, and assist them in bringing the vocation, if it exist, under the notice of the Bishop, with whom the matter must then be left.

While the idea of presenting their son to the Church must never rest on unworthy motives, (such as, being a means of getting him an education which it is beyond their own resources to give), parents on the other hand must beware of opposing a vocation clearly defined, and must not thwart the dispositions of God's providence in regard to a child. Such conduct would usually be selfishness, and would also be ingratitude shown for the honour and privilege conferred

upon them of having the distinction of giving a son to God's service in the Church; moreover, it would be the means of bringing great misery on him for the rest of his life, as not being destined for a position in the world, and it might thus even jeopardize his eternity; he would there be exposed to dangers, without having the necessary graces bestowed on him that would enable him to face them; God does not call him to life in the world, and therefore does not necessarily grant him grace for such a career. A terrible example of the evil of opposing a vocation is related of a wealthy man who lived at Tudela, in Spain, who had an only son, whom he destined to perpetuate his name. The son, however, feeling he had a vocation to the religious life, after persevering efforts was at length received. The father followed him to the novitiate, and by entreaties and tears succeeded in bringing him back to the world. After awhile, the son again felt the call of God to religion, and he entered a second time, and a second time he was drawn back to the world. The father now wished to have him married, and had already found him a partner; the son, however, as was natural, made a choice of his own. This produced discord and mischief, which went to such a length that one day he killed his father, with the result that he himself died on the scaffold! How many evils follow from opposing a religious vocation, which is sometimes too little appreciated even in Catholic families. Let parents, therefore, be wise, and if they discover any signs of a religious vocation in either son or daughter, so far from opposing it, be it their pride and consolation to do what they can to foster it, and daily beg of God in their prayers to bring it to happy fruition.

*To God alone* – God is the Supreme Being, infinite in all perfections, Creator of all that we see around, the vast universe and all it contains, and sovereign Lord of all. He is the Being above all beings, and therefore to Him must be offered a worship that may not be offered to any other

being, and that peculiar worship is sacrifice. To offer this to any but God alone would be the sin of idolatry. Never may we offer it, therefore, to any of the Saints, not even to Mary, the Queen of Saints. They would reject and abhor such homage, did we venture to offer it, for they know well how unworthy they are to receive it, and how improper and unseemly it would be in us to present it. Yet we may offer sacrifice *in their honour*, to thank God for the graces He has bestowed upon them, which have raised them to their present position of glory in Heaven; to congratulate them on the magnificent victory they have gained and the triumph they have won; and, finally, to beg their prayers and intercession on behalf of ourselves, who are still doing battle in the world, and striving for the prize they have already earned.

*Lord of all* – God Almighty, being Creator of all things, is alone absolute Lord of all; hence in sacrifice which can be offered only to Him, there must be found something that expresses this supreme dominion over all things, His power over life and death, and that is the slaying or consuming of the thing offered, which thus becomes a victim. This destruction of the victim will be more fully developed in the next chapter.

From all this, it may be seen how wide is the difference between Sacrifice and other acts of Religion; e.g.,

*Prayer* is the raising up of our minds and hearts to God; this is certainly most necessary in the spiritual life, but is only an interior act of adoration or praise, while Sacrifice is a material thing, so dealt with as to manifest outwardly those feelings of the heart.

*Sacraments* are visible signs of grace, conveying to the souls of men the merits and effects of Our Lord's Passion and



Death, that is the sacrifice of Himself on Calvary, whereby was wrought the Redemption of mankind, which the Sacraments apply to our individual souls.

*Ceremonies* are mere external rites used in the worship of God, as He Himself ordained in the Old Law, and as the Church continues in the New. Man is much impressed by teaching which is conveyed in the form of symbols, and many existing ceremonies are really symbolical, but differ essentially from Sacrifice itself, of which they form but the outward accompaniment.

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It is quite natural to man and very reasonable to make offerings to those whom he loves and holds in esteem on earth; how much more natural, then, and more reasonable to make an offering to his best and most faithful friend – God Almighty in Heaven? It need not surprise us, therefore, if we find that from the beginning of the world's history men made offerings to Him to whom they felt bound to pay the supreme worship of adoration. Reason alone suggested to man the duty of thus testifying his absolute dependence on God, who, moreover, Himself revealed to our first parents the obligation of thus honouring Him, and tradition has handed it on through all the ages of time.

Hence it is that we find, on reading the pages of the Old Testament, that sacrifice has ever been offered to God from the beginning, even among nations the most pagan. Cain and Abel, sons of our first parents, offered it; Cain was a husbandman, and “offered of the fruits of the earth gifts to the Lord,” while Abel was a shepherd, and “offered of the firstlings of his flock” (Genesis 4). When the waters of the Flood had abated, Noah and his family and all living things that had been with him in the Ark went forth therefrom, and Noah “built an altar to the Lord, and . . . offered holocausts

upon the altar” (Genesis 8:20). This was more than two thousand years before Christ. Later on, Abraham “built an altar to the Lord” which implies the offering of sacrifice to Him (Genesis 13:18). On another occasion, he was about to immolate his’ own son, Isaac, in sacrifice, according to God’s direct command, and would have completed the offering, had not God sent an angel to stay the hand of His servant, ready to obey the terrible order from Heaven (Genesis 22). Melchisedech offered sacrifice under the form of bread and wine, very typical of the great sacrifice of the Mass in the New Law (Genesis 14). And so, through the long history of the patriarchs, we find them offering to God cattle, sheep, birds, and fruits of the earth, and from all such sacrifices “the Lord smelled a sweet savour” (Genesis 8:21), that is, they were pleasing in His sight, testifying man’s dependence on Him, and foreshadowing the Sacrifice of the Cross, through which fact they became acceptable to God, and derived all their merit and efficacy.

These sacrifices were of many kinds, of which the following are the chief ones:

1. *Holocaust*, or whole-burnt offering; the victim was entirely consumed by fire on the altar, its destruction affirming God’s absolute dominion over His creatures, His power over life and death, and His full right to the homage of adoration. Job offered holocausts for his children, to obtain pardon of the sins they might have committed (Job 1:5). Such also was the sacrifice of Noah referred to above.
2. *Peace offerings* were made to thank Almighty God for favours He had bestowed, as also to implore His future mercies. When Josue had gained a victory over the King of Hai, he “built an altar to the Lord . . . and immolated victims of peace offerings” (Joshua 8:31).

3. *Sin offerings* were intended to expiate lesser sins committed through ignorance or frailty. The princes of Israel, at the dedication of the altar in the Tabernacle, made sundry offerings each day for over a week, and among them on each day was offered a buck goat for sin (Numbers 7).

4. *Trespass offering* was made for some particular sin, committed willfully or through culpable ignorance, and in general for sins of a more grievous kind, especially where injustice had been done, and restitution became obligatory.

These various offerings were all typical of the Sacrifice of the New Law, and as this is of a twofold form, so were they of two kinds.

1. *Bloody* sacrifices consisted of living victims, such as oxen, lambs, turtle-doves, etc.: as they were destroyed and their blood was shed, they typified the bloody Sacrifice of Calvary, wherein Our Lord shed His Precious Blood for the souls of men, as the Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world.

2. *Unbloody* oblations, in which there was no shedding of blood, consisted of the fruits of the earth, flour, corn, oil, or wine. These were typical of the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass.

How jealous is God of the worship of Sacrifice, and how highly He values it, may be inferred from the voluminous instructions which He gave to Moses relative to this Divine act. Not a rubric, not a detail of ceremonial rite was omitted. The material, size and shape and furnishing of the altar, the choice and qualifications of the priests, the style of victim, the varying kinds of sacrifices, the very hours of offering: nothing was too minute to be passed over, even to the form and ornamentation of the priestly vestments. What an idea

does this not convey of the sublime excellence and surpassing dignity of the Divine worship of Sacrifice!

And in the new law of grace, so anxious was Jesus Christ that sacrifice should be offered with perfect reverence and decorum, that He Himself celebrated the first Christian oblation in the presence of His chosen Apostles, that it might serve as a model and copy for all time.

But apart from the Jewish race to whom these directions were given, we find that all nations of the earth, pagan and idolatrous included, have ever made sacrifice the principal act of their worship. No matter how false their notions of the Deity, they retained enough of the primitive revelation to remind them of the obligation of appeasing the anger, or invoking the blessing, of the Divinity, by means of victims and sacrifices. Plutarch, a writer of the second century, says: "You may find cities without walls, without literature, and without the arts and sciences of civilized life, but you will never find a city without priests and altars, or which has not sacrifices offered to the gods." Though the offerings of pagan nations were made to idols, the principle remains – their conviction of the necessity of sacrifice as essential to Religion.

But when the Old Law was abrogated, was sacrifice abolished with it? By no means; God, on the contrary, declared that the Jewish sacrifices would be succeeded by a clean victim, that would be offered in every age and clime. These are the words He addressed to the Jews by the voice of His prophet: "I have no pleasure in you . . . and I will not receive a gift of your hand. For, from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation" (Malachi 1:10,11). – Herein we have the prophet foretelling, four hundred years

beforehand, an acceptable oblation to be offered to God, and the fulfillment of the prophecy is found, not among the Pagans nor the Mahometans, not among the Jews nor the Protestant sects, but solely and exclusively among Catholics. The Pagans worship false gods, while none of the others have any sacrifice at all, till we come to the Catholic Church, where alone the Prophet's words are fulfilled in the pure victim offered in the Mass.

Being without sacrifice, in the strict sense of the term, Protestants seem to consider prayer as a sacrifice; hence, possibly, their repugnance to offer prayer to the Saints, as we do; hence, too, the accusation they bring against us, of honouring the Saints almost more than God, though the Bible itself amply demonstrates the influence and love of the Saints in our regard, and gives many examples of the honour and prayer men have offered to them.

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From what has here been said, it will appear that there are points of difference between the Holy Eucharist as a Sacrament and as a Sacrifice.

1. As a sacrament, its efficacy and power lie in its worthy reception into the soul, while, as a sacrifice, it is the oblation or offering that constitutes its essence and efficiency.
2. As a sacrament, the Holy Eucharist increases grace and merit in the soul of the worthy communicant, and does for his soul what food does for his body, while, as a sacrifice, it pays homage to God and is able to make atonement and reparation for sin, like the sacrifice of Calvary, of which indeed it is the continuation to the end of time.
3. In its quality of sacrament, the Holy Eucharist benefits him only who receives it as his spiritual food, and that too in

proportion to the fervour and devotion he brings to its reception. As a sacrifice, however, it benefits the Universal Church, nay the whole world to some extent, inasmuch as it brings down God's blessings on men, and tends to appease the Divine anger, aroused by the sins of the world.

4. The chief object of the Eucharist as a sacrament is to sanctify the hearts of men through their reception of it, as their supernatural food and support; such close contact with the sanctity of God is bound to work its effect upon them, purifying them more and more, and leading them to the heights of sanctity. On the other hand, the chief object of the Sacrifice of the Eucharist, is to offer to God the supreme homage and adoration, which, as His creatures, we owe to Him, and by it we offer worship truly worthy of Himself, inasmuch as therein is presented to the eternal Father His own Divine Son, as the victim of infinite value.

These few thoughts show how there is found to be a clear difference in the Holy Eucharist considered as Sacrament or Sacrifice, and the remembrance of these distinctions will enable us to see the need of the twofold division of our subject.

# The Sacrifice of the New Law

After forty centuries of time, during which men had honoured God, by offering Him sacrifices of oxen, fruit, and wine, the Old Law at length came to an end and was altogether abrogated, the New Law now taking its place. With the abolition of the Old Law, the Jewish sacrifices were no longer pleasing to God, and they too were now to cease; they had fulfilled their purpose – the typifying of the great sacrifice of the Law of Grace – and from that fact had derived their value and merit before God.

Sacrifice, as we have seen, is the essential and divinely revealed form of the worship of God, the central act of Religion, and as the Old Law had its offerings of many kinds, so in the New Law, sacrifice must still be found; this sacrifice is the Holy Mass.

The name “Mass” is derived from the Latin word *missa*, itself a contraction of *missio*, which means a dismissal, or sending away. One dismissal of the people took place, in the early Church, after the Gospel; those who were known as Catechumens, converts either from Paganism or Judaism, had to leave then, without assisting at the remainder of the service. Catechumens were they who had abandoned the Synagogue and were being instructed in the truths of the Christian Faith, by way of preparation for admission to Baptism. The Church jealously guarded against their gaining any knowledge of the sacred mysteries, till their instruction was about completed, and their sincerity fully tested; hence, after hearing the Epistle and Gospel and an explanation given upon them, the Catechumens were dismissed from the Assembly as being unprepared yet to see or hear more of the sacred Liturgy, and unworthy to be present at the solemn

act of sacrifice. This rule was known as the *Disciplina arcani*, the “Discipline of the Secret,” which kept from all, save the initiated, the more solemn parts of the Church’s services and doctrines. A relic of this practice is very common, even to this day, in the Church: thus, for instance, in many of her ceremonies and in the Divine Office, the *Pater* and *Credo* are not said aloud, but only the first and last words of each; for the Faithful were alone permitted to know this prayer and the profession of faith; hence, they were not said aloud in presence of the Catechumens, and this silence is still observed.

When the Sacrifice was fully concluded, the deacon used to intimate to the Faithful that they might now disperse, and addressed to them the words that still remain in use: *Ite, missa est*: “Go, Mass is ended.” Thus there was the Mass of the Catechumens, and the Mass of the Faithful. In course of time, the Discipline of the Secret fell into disuse, exclusion from the sacred mysteries ceased to be enforced, and the entire service came to be known as the “Mass,” word retained to this day, “Liturgy” being the name used in the Greek Church.

Now the Mass is a true and real sacrifice, according to the definition already given, as may be seen from the following points, showing how it has all the essentials of sacrifice.

1. In the first place, there is a *Victim*, the invisible Body and Blood of Christ, under the visible forms of bread and wine. A change in the victim is effected by the twofold consecration of these substances by which it is mystically slain or destroyed. For, by virtue of the words only of the consecration of the bread, as distinct from the consecration of the wine, the Body and Blood of Our Lord are separated from each other, which implies death, for the body cannot



live without the blood, and thus they are offered to God, as a victim sacrificed to the honour of His name.

2. There is also a lawful *Minister*. Jesus Christ is Himself the invisible High Priest, offering this sacrifice, as He offered that of the Cross. He is called a priest according to the order of Melchisedech. That patriarch of the Old Law offered sacrifices of bread and wine, of all the Scriptural types the most representative of the Mass. But there is likewise a visible priest, duly ordained and set apart for the purpose. For sacrifice is an outward act or ceremony and needs therefore a visible minister for its performance. He shares the priesthood of Our Divine Lord, and in his ordination receives power to offer up Mass for the living and the dead.

3. The Mass is offered to *God alone*. We have seen how sacrifice is a distinctive act of worship offered only to God and never to any created being. Thus is it with Holy Mass; only to God is it, or can it be, presented, not to any of the Saints. It may be offered in their honour, but finally it is only to God that this supreme act of worship is paid. Thus, as the feast days of the year are announced to us Sunday by Sunday, Mass is said in honour of the Saints, but to God alone is the sacrifice directly offered.

4. The Mass is offered *to acknowledge God's supreme dominion* over us, and our absolute dependence on Him for all we have or need. We acknowledge this dominion by the mystical destruction of the victim, through the twofold consecration, the words of which have been called the "sacrificial knife," slaying the victim on the Altar, which denotes God's right over the life of His creatures. Hence, two outward species are needed for the sacrifice of the Eucharist, bread and wine, while one species only is sufficient for the Sacrament of the Eucharist, as we receive Our Lord whole and entire under each form separately.

This is the great sacrifice of the New Law, foretold and prefigured so often in the Old. All the ancient sacrifices received their power to please God from the fact that they were types of the Holy Mass; it is the “clean oblation,” spoken of by Malachi, the last of the prophets (Malachi 1:11).

Even under the Old Covenant, the sacrifices of food and fruit were esteemed more highly than those of animals, as the latter savoured of sin, blood and defilement. Bread and wine, produced from grains of wheat and grapes of the vine, are most excellent gifts of the earth to man, and thus are the “clean oblation,” on account of their simplicity and absence of any noxious ingredient.

This same Holy Sacrifice also fulfills the prophecy as to time and place of offering. Under the Old Dispensation, Sacrifice was offered morning and evening only, and only in the Temple, but Holy Mass in the New Law is continuously and everywhere being offered to God; night and day without cease, in one country or another, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, it is offered to God’s name, and His glory is proclaimed among the nations.

Illustrative examples may easily be found by means of a simple calculation. For every 15 degrees of longitude east or west of Greenwich, the day will be an hour before or behind us. Hence, with the aid of a map, a wide range of countries can be named in which Mass can be offered, when the hour for offering it with us is passed. Thus, while our last Mass on Sunday is being said about 11 a.m. the early Masses are just beginning in Canada and South America. And so, for other hours and other countries, the Holy Sacrifice is being continually offered to Heaven. “From the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the

Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation” (Malachi 1:11).

Thus is the Holy Mass the great ordinance of God, designed from the beginning to give Him honour and glory, and to give grace and salvation to the souls of men. – Holy, indeed, as being the most sacred and sublime act that mortal man can offer to his Creator, far exceeding the merits and sanctity of the oblations made under the Old Law. Saints indeed have trembled at the thought of having to offer it, while of many it is recorded that they hid away in the mountains, or even mutilated themselves, that they might not be called upon to offer the tremendous sacrifice, for which they deemed themselves unfit and unworthy.

Because of the dignity and holiness of the Mass, the Church surrounds it with all the pomp and splendour she can command. Nothing can be too great or too noble in the way of richness of vestments, beauty of harmony or stateliness of ceremony, where the honour of her Divine Founder is in question; and the greater the Festival, the greater, too, are the efforts she puts forth to this end.

Herein the Church teaches the Faithful practical lessons: that they must ever regard the Eucharistic Sacrifice with the eyes of lively faith, be anxious to assist at it as often as their circumstances may allow, and never be guilty of any form of irreverence while it is being offered. How well the Saints took these lessons to heart!

Being in the employ of a Spanish farmer, Saint Isidore yet contrived to get to Mass every morning, though he had much to bear from his employer and others in doing so. A graceful legend says that one morning, while he was still at Mass, his master, going into the fields, found two oxen, guided by an angel, drawing the plough behind them. From

that time forth, far from preventing Isidore from going to church, his employer gave him every encouragement to go, and thanked God for giving him one who brought Heaven's blessing on the farm.

Not on Sundays only, but every day of the week, Saint Zita, a humble domestic servant, was accustomed to hear Mass, getting up early for the purpose, so as not to neglect her household work. Her fervour and demeanour during the Holy Sacrifice were most angelic; it was then that she drank in the courage she needed for her trials, and received those abundant graces, which raised her finally to such a high degree of sanctity.

Though Chancellor of England, with many occupations, Blessed Thomas More heard Mass every day. Once a message was brought to him from the king, requiring his attendance on a matter of importance. "A little patience," replied the Chancellor; "I have not yet completed my homage to a higher Sovereign, and I must await the end of the Divine audience."

In our own humble measure, let us endeavour to imitate the Saints, and we cannot fail to reap for ourselves many benefits, both spiritual and temporal, while to God we shall give the highest glory He can receive at the hands of men.

# The Holy Mass

After seeing how sacrifice exists in the Christian Religion, as it had existed also in the Jewish, and how the Sacrifice of the New Law is the Mass, let us consider now what Holy Mass really is.

The Mass is the offering to God of the Body and Blood of Our Lord under the appearances of bread and wine. This Body and Blood of Our Lord is the invisible Victim that is offered up to Heaven, the same as in the Sacrifice of Calvary, though the form and manner of offering be different; that of Calvary was a bloody sacrifice, in that Our Saviour's body was there mangled and bleeding, while on the Altar the Sacrifice is an unbloody and clean Victim; the mystical death, the separation of body and blood, is effected by the two-fold consecration, which is of the essence of the Mass for that reason; hence also the need of two species for the Sacrifice, though one suffice for the Sacrament.

On Calvary, when Our Lord offered Himself in His visible human form, He made the offering for the general redemption of mankind, "blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us" (Colossians 2:14). For the offering of Himself was an act of infinite merit before the Father, making reparation for the sins of the entire human race, and capable of atoning for those of ten thousand worlds. Thus were our souls "purchased at a great price," and redeemed from hell, to which they had been condemned by the Fall of our first parents.

On the Altar, the same Victim is offered in an invisible manner, being hidden from our bodily eyes by the species of the bread and wine, and this for the purpose of continuing and renewing daily the Sacrifice of the Cross, that the graces

therein merited for us may be applied to the individual souls of men.

The mere fact of Our Redeemer's sacrificing Himself on the Cross does not of itself save all mankind, otherwise all men would come to salvation, no matter who or what they are, how they live, or how they die. The merits of Our Lord's death must be applied to us individually, and be as a healing medicine to our souls. To illustrate this: a reservoir of pure fresh water is a great blessing, a necessity for the inhabitants of a large town; the quantity of water in reserve is more than enough for the wants of the population. But for anyone who is in need of water, what will it avail him to know there is a large reservoir at a distance, if he cannot get at it? If anyone need the water, he must either go for it, or have it brought to him in some way.

So, in the process of the Redemption; the graces Our Lord merited by His death are an inexhaustible fountain for all men. But the waters of this fountain must be applied to their souls, or they will perish. Therefore Our Redeemer did not content Himself with meriting precious graces for us, but also instituted channels by which they might be conveyed to our souls individually, these channels being the Sacraments and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Mass is offered to God, and to Him alone, as all sacrifice must be, and it is offered daily on a thousand altars all the world over. In the Jewish Religion, sacrifice was offered every day, hence must it be offered every day in the New Law, since the Christian Religion is the more perfect. Thus moreover is the prophecy of Malachi fulfilled, which foretold that, from the rising of the sun to its setting, sacrifice was to be offered in every place to God, the clean oblation of the Holy Mass.

He who offers the Mass is He who also offered Himself on Calvary – Our Divine Saviour, invisible, though truly present – by the visible ministry of rightly ordained priests. Before the coming of Our Lord, there existed two kinds of sacrifice, the bloody sacrifice of animals, and the unbloody sacrifice of bread, wine, oil, or fruit. Both these had been offered from the beginning, for Abel offered a lamb, and Cain the fruits of the earth. As there were two kinds of sacrifice, so there were two classes of priesthood: that of Aaron, for the sacrifice of animals, whose blood was actually shed, and that of Melchisedech, for the offering of bread and wine. Now, Our Blessed Lord united in His own Divine Person both orders of priesthood. He used bread and wine for the sacrifice at the Last Supper, according to the rite of Melchisedech, while on the following day He offered Himself up in a bloody manner, as Victim for our sins, on the Cross, according to the rite of Aaron.

We have already seen how Our Lord instituted the Blessed Sacrament the night before He died. It is not necessary, therefore, to repeat the details of that loving act of condescension. But it may be remarked here that the consecration of the Chalice, being made immediately after that of the Host, represents in a vivid manner the effusion of Our Saviour's Blood on the Cross, and His death which followed that shedding of blood. He placed the two Species on the table, in the state of sacrifice, offering it to His Father, in unbloody form; to complete it, He partook of it Himself, and commanded His Apostles also to receive it, thus effecting a mystic death by the destruction of His Sacramental life. Herein was the Sacrifice of the New Law instituted in its essential parts – the Consecration and the Communion – the Holy Mass, which the Apostles were immediately afterwards empowered and commanded to offer.

The Mass is offered chiefly and invisibly by Our Lord Himself, the Great High Priest of the New Law, and by the Bishops and Priests of the Church visibly, because it is an outward act of worship, needing a visible ministry, this, too, quite independently of their personal merits or demerits. But it may also be said in a certain sense to be offered by the Faithful themselves, united to the Priest at the Altar. He implies this, when he turns to them and says: *Orate, fratres*: “Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and *yours* may be acceptable to God, the Father Almighty.” This word “brethren” recalls to our minds the expression of apostolic antiquity, for Saint Peter, in the Acts, used it in addressing the people in Jerusalem, and we know well how frequently Saint Paul uses it in his Epistles. In a more extended sense still, the Mass may be said to be offered by the whole Church, in virtue of that consoling and encouraging doctrine of the Communion of Saints, by which all the members of the Church are in communion with each other, by their prayers, their sacrifices, and good works.

In the beautiful rite of Ordination, the Bishop addresses these words to the young priest: “Receive power to offer sacrifice to God, and to celebrate Mass for the living and for the dead.” In these weighty words we find the objects for which the Holy Sacrifice may be offered: “the living and the dead.” Sunday by Sunday we hear it announced that Mass will be said on the following days for various intentions, such as, for instance, a person who is ill, for the members of some society, a conversion, or some special intention, i.e., it is offered “for the living.” Or, more commonly still, the offering is made for the repose of the soul of some one lately deceased, for an anniversary, or for the souls in Purgatory generally, i.e., it is offered “for the dead.”

1. For those still on *earth* we may offer the Holy Sacrifice, whether for individuals, or for the Church at large, or for any



or all of the great ends of sacrifice, which will be dealt with in the next chapter.

2. In regard to those who have already passed into “the house of their eternity,” we may offer it for the souls in *Purgatory*, that God may be pleased to lessen the intensity of their pains, to shorten their time of suffering, or even to release them entirely from their prison, and take them to Himself in His Kingdom.

3. For the Saints in *Heaven* we do not pray or offer sacrifice, for they are now in secure possession of their eternal reward, and need not our intercession. Yet we offer it in their honour, to thank God, who is wonderful in His Saints, for all He has done for them, to congratulate them on their final triumph, thus to procure them an increase of accidental glory, and especially to obtain their prayers in our behalf. By virtue of that same dogma of the Communion of Saints, we can thus effectively appeal to the friends of God in Heaven for their aid in our trials, and they, on the other hand, can plead before the throne of mercy for such graces and mercies as we may need, thus continuing, perfected in Heaven, the charity that animated them while living on earth.

4. As to the unhappy souls in *Hell*, no prayers are of any avail; the Holy Sacrifice cannot assist them, they are beyond the reach of even its mighty influence! They are no longer members of the Church, but are as dead branches of a tree cast into the fire to burn: this fire is eternal, will never be quenched; the Precious Blood of Christ shed for man cannot now relieve them, for there is no communion between the Church and them; they are placed for ever beyond her reach!

Such is the great Sacrifice of the Mass, the central act of the Christian Religion. The Fathers of the Church have vied with

each other in extolling its dignity and majesty and power. They speak of it as the renewal of the mysteries of Our Lord's life, death, and resurrection; of the wonderful graces it brings to men; they praise it as the strength of the faithful soul, the hope of the dying, and joy of the Blessed in Heaven; all which explains the hatred that Satan has ever shown in every age to the celebration of the Divine Mysteries.

Seeing thus the excellence of the Holy Mass, surely we can draw a few practical conclusions for our daily lives in regard to it, lessons we should seriously take to heart and show forth by our conduct.

1. The first of these is the great esteem we must have for this adorable sacrifice. Think and reflect on what has been said of it; remember how the Saints have appreciated it, and Martyrs have died for it; this should strengthen and enliven your faith and teach you to value it as they have done.

2. If you know what the Mass is, you will endeavour to assist at it as often as your circumstances may allow. Examples have already been given in this respect, that should be an encouragement to all to adopt the pious practice. One more may be added here. Saint Louis, King of France, attended at two, and sometimes even four, Masses in the day. Having heard that some of his courtiers censured him for devoting to the hearing of Mass the time that was so necessary for treating the affairs of his kingdom, he said: "See how far the solicitude of these men goes! If I gave to hunting or to some other frivolous amusement the time that I spend at Mass, I would not hear a word of blame from any of them."

3. When you do go to Mass, let it be with deep feelings of faith, fervour, and love. Go in spirit to Calvary and take your stand at the foot of the Cross; see the Virgin Mother, see

Mary Magdalen and the beloved Disciple there, and endeavour to make their feelings your own; your dispositions will then be good, and worthy of the same great offering at the Altar. A prayer book will, as a rule, be of use to you, and help to fix your attention, if you endeavour to feel within you the sentiments of the prayers you read. A further help is to have some definite intention to pray for. Merely to go to Mass as a habit, and without seeking any particular grace or favour, is to lose much benefit. Have some special object to pray for, some grace to ask, and your experience will prove that your attendance at Mass will be more devout, your dispositions more fervent, and the results more fruitful.

4. Let boys and young men deem it an honour to serve at the Altar; learn the Latin and the ceremonies with intelligent care, and let every movement be made with the reverent awe that fills the angels before the throne of God in Heaven. Blessed Thomas More took great delight in serving Mass, and, though his time was much taken up with affairs of State, frequently served several in succession. On one occasion, a certain courtier, sadly deficient in lively faith, represented to him that King Henry would be displeased at his lowering himself to fulfill the office of acolyte. "Surely," replied the Chancellor, "the king cannot be displeased at the homage I offer to his King!"

5. If girls and young women cannot enjoy the privilege of serving at the Altar, they can do something equivalent: they can stitch and sew, make or mend the vestments, attend to the Altar linen and so forth. They could provide some of these things for poor churches, where meanness and destitution are too often in evidence. Thus acted Marie Eustelle Harpain, a poor sempstress, who lived and died in the odour of sanctity in the early half of last century. So great was her love and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament,

that she was called the “Angel of the Eucharist.” Her devotion consisted not only in prayer, but also in active work on or about the Altar and all that pertained in any way to its service, a model to many, who might thus prove their love for Jesus in the Tabernacle.

6. Above all, never miss Mass on Sundays or Holy-days, except it be for most solid reasons, that may be valid in the eyes of God. Too common nowadays is the habit growing of staying away from Mass, for any and every paltry excuse that may present itself, and too much reason is there to fear that God’s anger may overtake us in consequence, affecting not merely those actually guilty of the willful omission, but perhaps those also among whom they live! For it is a grievous sin, and one peculiarly displeasing to God, as being so cold-blooded and deliberate, and lacking the excuse of strong passion. There is no sudden passion here, hurrying a man on to sin, and carrying him away almost before he is aware of it; it is simply a calm and calculated neglect, which makes its guilt all the greater.

7. Short of missing Mass, there are many, too many, who come late to it, and to many^ of the Church Services. This is most disrespectful, and denotes a want of faith and reverence. When willful, it is an insult to God in His own house, and that, too, at the very time we profess to come there to adore Him! It is moreover distracting and annoying to neighbours, as it is also disedifying by the evil example it gives. We should blush to go late to a party, and yet are not ashamed to walk late into church, where the Faithful are assembled, as though we were going to a promenade concert, where people may come or go as they please. Think the matter over, and remember the weighty words of the prophet: “Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully,” or negligently (Jeremiah 48:10). Once again, a

more lively faith would enable us to avoid this displeasing habit.

8. Lastly, prayers and communions in reparation for the neglect of Mass, and for irreverence shown during the offering of it will always be most pleasing to God; it is an unselfish devotion, seeking nothing but His greater glory, though at the same time it tends to appease the Divine anger and to avert the chastisements of Heaven from falling on the earth.

Here are a few lessons and suggestions of a practical kind that naturally present themselves as corollaries of what has been said on the exalted nature, the dignity and beauty of Holy Mass. Were they but generally observed by the Faithful, how much would reverence and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament be intensified and increased!

# Ends for Which Mass Is Offered

Quite apart from the Fall of our first parents, which involved the moral and physical world in so much evil, there are three chief duties which man owes to God, the creature to his Creator.

1. The first of these is *Adoration*, by which he acknowledges God to be his Lord and Master, the Creator who gave him his being, and without whose sustaining power he would fall back into his original nothingness. By adoration, man admits all this, recognizes his duty, and offers to God the highest worship he is capable of.

2. *Thanksgiving* is likewise a duty we owe to God, in return for all the graces and favours of every kind that He has showered down in such profusion on each of us, from our earliest existence.

3. Moreover, man is so weak and helpless, he stands in need of so much, that *Petition* becomes a further duty, and he must ask of God's bountiful goodness the many things he requires day by day, both in the spiritual order and the temporal.

These three duties seem clearly part of man's obligation, even before sin came and rendered them more imperative. But after the Fall, a further obligation arose, that of making -

4. *Satisfaction* - The Divine Majesty is offended by every sin, even the slightest, that men commit. When, therefore, sin first entered the world, the duty of making reparation followed as a consequence, just as the shadow follows the substance.

Here, then, is a four-fold duty that man owes to God, and the Sacrifice of the Mass offered, always and everywhere, is the divinely instituted means whereby he may most fully and perfectly fulfill his obligations. We shall see this, as we take them through separately, and consider in some detail how Holy Mass fulfills them all.

1. *Honour and Glory of God* – It is the first essential duty of everyone of us to give glory to God; it is also the first and highest end of sacrifice. God is jealous of His honour, as He declares by the mouth of His prophet: “I will not give my glory to another” (Isaiah 42:8). And yet men rob God of His honour, by their neglect of His worship, and by their sins against Him. All the Saints and Angels of God’s Creation together could never offer Him adequate glory, for they are but finite beings, hence all their efforts and endeavours are likewise finite and limited. The Cherubim and Seraphim, therefore, with their burning love and zeal, even Mary, the Queen of Heaven, with all her virtue and merit, could not, together, offer to God the homage of adoration and glory which are His due, for they are but creatures, and therefore finite.

Now, Our Lord on the Cross, in offering Himself up in death, presented to the Father in Heaven the most perfect act of honour and glory, because He offered up Himself who was Son of God, equal to the Father in all things. Thus did God, for the first time in the history of Creation, have sacrifice offered to Him really worthy of His Divine Majesty. All the sacrifices of the Old Law were but as smoke and vanity before Him, as regards their intrinsic merit and value, and they only became pleasing in His sight, inasmuch as they had been ordained by Himself to be typical of the great Sacrifice of the future, the death of His Son on the Cross.

We have already seen how the Sacrifice of the Mass is the same as that of Calvary; thus, then, Holy Mass likewise offers to God honour and glory infinite in value and truly worthy of Him, the Victim being none other than His own Divine Son. In offering, then, the holy Sacrifice of the Altar, we are enabled to pay to God the primary duty we owe to Him, that of homage and adoration, and that, too, in a manner worthy of God, despite our own unworthiness and sin.

Did we but realize that we have it in our power to present to the Lord God of our creation a worship of infinite value and actually worthy of His acceptance, how eager we should be to present it daily to His Divine Majesty! and with what sentiments of devotion we should accompany the offering! Such was the thought that animated the Saints and holy people of every age; the same thought duly meditated on will fill us likewise with zeal and devotion.

2. *Thanksgiving* – Number, if you are able, the countless mercies of God to man, spiritual and temporal, in every form! Think of those you yourself have received individually, from your earliest recollection down to the present time. Is not the thought of Gods bounty and generosity enough to overwhelm you? and do you not feel powerless to express your gratitude for them? Yet gratitude is a most important duty, though too often forgotten by men. But how can we, sinners as we are, dare to approach the throne of God to thank Him for His endless benefits? And if we did dare, what have we to offer Him in return? *Quid retribuam Domino?* “What shall I render to the Lord for all He hath rendered unto me?” Such may well be the cry of the helpless soul. But the answer is soon forthcoming: “I will take the chalice of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord.”

In other words, the Sacrifice of the Eucharist, as its name implies, gives us the means of offering to God, not only



infinite glory, but also adequate thanksgiving for His benefits. For do we not there offer Him again His Divine Son, infinitely pleasing to Him, and therefore a return equal to all the graces we have ever received? The spirit of thanksgiving has always been a characteristic of the Saints, and they have grieved over the ingratitude of men, and have endeavoured to supply for this heartless indifference and neglect. Hence their love for Holy Mass, because by it they were able to make a worthy return for the Divine blessings bestowed on the world. Our Lord gave to Saint Bridget the increase of thanksgiving as the reason for the Sacrifice of the Mass. "My body," He said, "is daily immolated on the Altar, that men may love Me so much the more, and more frequently call to mind My blessings." Let us also be fired with the desire of thanksgiving, and assist at daily Mass, if possible, so as to make a worthy return of heartfelt gratitude to God, for the favours we have already received, or may yet receive at any future time.

3. *Petition for all Blessings* – When we reflect on the past, and recall the numberless favours we have received, we sometimes begin to wonder how we could ever have done without them, and what would have become of us, had it not been for God's generosity in our regard! This experience of the past should lead us to think of the future; we begin to understand how much we are dependent on God for all that we have or hope to have.

In the temporal order, we need the Divine help in our daily lives, that success and prosperity may crown our endeavours and lead to happiness and peace; things innumerable are necessary to us, and our wants are continuous. Then, if we turn to the higher order of things, the supernatural wants of our souls, the same holds good again, and we find how helpless we are of ourselves, and how many graces we need,

if we are to please God and save our souls, in spite of all the obstacles we encounter in the spiritual life.

Now, when we consider our sinfulness before God, and realize how unworthy we are to lay our petitions at His feet, we may well feel misgivings as to the prospect of our prayers being heard, or our requests being granted; and yet we cannot do without these favours of whatever kind. Thus, despair might easily overwhelm us, unless we could turn elsewhere for help.

Such help is to be found in the Holy Sacrifice. For, what can God Almighty refuse to us, when we offer Him His own Divine Son, and present our petitions through Him! How can God fail to hear us, when He sees this Victim, in whom He is well pleased, offered up to Him, and making appeal in our behalf! In his Passion and Death, Our Lord merited for us all the graces we may require, and it is through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that this fountain of treasures is opened and brought within our reach. To it, therefore, should we go, whenever we are in need of help, for it is truly the sacrifice of impetration, the effectual means of obtaining from God every kind of blessing.

Saint Porphyrius once went to Constantinople to ask a favour of the emperor. On his way, he met the servants of the latter carrying his infant son in their arms. The Bishop immediately drew near, and placed his petition in the hands of the young prince. The emperor, agreeably surprised at this singular artifice of the prelate, readily granted what he asked, through love for the little bearer – Let us ask in a similar manner the favours we wish to receive from God. In Holy Mass, the adorable Victim on the Altar is ever ready to carry our prayers before the Throne in Heaven. Hence, let us go in all confidence to Him, and pray according to the wants of our hearts.

Lingard tells us in his History how good King Ethelred, in the ninth century, seeing the Danes overrunning this country, marched out to meet them with an army, small as to numbers, but fired with a martial spirit. On the morning of the battle, he attended Holy Mass to prepare himself for the desperate combat in which he was about to engage. During the Mass, a message was sent to him, announcing the advance of the enemy, and saying it was necessary he should hurry to lead his troops to battle. But Ethelred continued hearing Mass with the same fervour and recollection as before, saying he would not leave the church until he had united himself to the Conqueror of conquerors, and had obtained His blessing. When he had communicated and Mass was ended, he arose full of burning ardour, placed himself at the head of his army, and in a few hours gained a brilliant victory over the Danes. Behold an example worthy of our imitation; we may appeal to Our Saviour in Holy Mass. Let the weak and the tempted go to Mass, and they will gain the courage and strength of heavenly grace; let sinners go to Mass, and they will feel their hearts moved with grace to repent and amend; let the poor and the heartbroken go and lay their wants of every kind before their compassionate Saviour, and He will not send them away empty-handed. The young and innocent, the old and weary will alike find there the joy and comfort and consolation they seek for. Not till the great judgment day shall we know what blessings and graces we owe to the most Holy Sacrifice! It is a perennial fountain, ever flowing with the waters of grace and mercy. "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (Isaiah 12:3).

4. *Pardon for Sin* – As sinners who have offended God, we owe to Him a further duty still, the duty of seeking pardon for our offences against Him, and of making reparation for them; for, if we fail in this, we cannot please God, or come to the possession of Him in Heaven. Could any mortal being

reckon up the sins of the world at this present moment, without referring at all to those of ages gone by! And, apart from the sins of others, can anyone count up his own? Yet for these we must ask pardon and do penance.

Mortal sin is the greatest of evils, and has been chastised most severely by the hand of God, even in this life. We have only to remember how the sin of Adam and Eve was punished, both on them and their posterity, by the sorrows and sufferings of mankind, from the day of the Fall down to the present time. Sin increased and multiplied among men, and the stench thereof rose up to Heaven; then God in His anger sent the deluge to purify the earth from its iniquities (Genesis 6:7). Sodom and Gomorrha were guilty of such crimes, that God rained down fire and brimstone from Heaven, to destroy them off the face of the earth (Genesis 19). For the sin of idolatry among the Israelites, God commanded three and twenty thousand of them to be slain in one day (Exodus 32:28). Then, for one single mortal sin, if we die unrepentant, Heaven is lost forever, and Hell will be our unending punishment! Yet God is all love for His creatures, and all justice in dealing with them; He cannot punish sin one iota more than justice requires. Yet, see how He *has* punished it, and even yet punishes it in eternity. How great, then, is the evil of sin before Him, and how intense the hatred He bears to it! Of ourselves we could never atone for it. Not all the Saints in Heaven together could do so, for we are all of us but finite beings. In love for His fallen creatures, Our Blessed Saviour came and suffered, and sacrificed Himself, a victim of infinite merit, to repair the evil that sin had offered to the offended majesty of the Father. The Sacrifice of the Cross is renewed in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and its infinite merits applied to our souls; hence it is that Holy Mass has power to appease God for our sins, obtain for us the spirit of true repentance, and lessen also

the temporal punishment due to sin, according to the measure of our dispositions.

Therefore let no one stay away from Mass on account of his sins, as people sometimes are inclined to do. Though a man be plunged in the depth of sin, let him, on that very account, hasten to Mass, humbly acknowledging his guilt before God, and expressing sorrow for what he has done. His heart will then be moved to true repentance, and though the Holy Sacrifice will not forgive his sins, it will at least dispose him for their forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance.

This Sacrifice of propitiation is offered up daily, hourly, all over the earth. What would become of the world without it? St Leonard of Port Maurice used to say, that, were it not for Holy Mass everywhere offered up to Heaven, God would destroy the world for its sins. To its efficacy, undoubtedly, we must attribute the lesser frequency in our day of those terrible chastisements with which God so often punished mankind in the olden time. The pages of the Old Testament give countless instances of such punishments, those already given being but a few examples. Sin is no less hateful to God now than it was then; on the contrary, it must be even more so, on account of the more abundant graces now bestowed on the world. Hence we may well understand how true are the words of holy men that, but for the Sacrifice of the Mass, we should long ago have been treated as were the wicked cities of the plain.

Why, then, do men so seldom go to Mass? Why do they hear it so distractedly? Why not seek now, by its means, to repair the insult offered to God and the injury done to their own souls by sin? What more effectual satisfaction can we ever offer to Heaven than this Sacrifice of the beloved Son of God?

Oh! try and bring home to yourselves the full import of all that the Saints have felt and said of the power of this Holy Sacrifice to repair the evil of sin. Then you will try to be present at Mass more frequently and more worthily, so as to appease God for the sins you have committed, and shorten the punishment they have brought upon you.

Sing often with the prophet of the Lord those words of gratitude and sorrow: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee: who forgiveth all thy iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion" (Psalm 102:2-4). Such are the mercies granted to us through this Sacrifice of propitiation.

The four great ends, then, of the Sacrifice of the Mass are: Adoration and Thanksgiving, Petition and Reparation. These are the four chief duties every man owes to God, and he is able perfectly to fulfill them by means of the Mass, of all forms of worship the most sublime before God, on account of the dignity of the Victim, the Son of God Himself, on account of the sanctity of the Priest who offers it, Jesus Christ again, on account of the wonderful effects it produces – giving glory to the ever Blessed Trinity and the heavenly Court, bringing relief to the Souls in Purgatory, and obtaining manifold blessings for mankind upon earth!

# On Hearing Mass

If the reader has understood the last chapter, and realizes the importance of what it teaches, he will surely endeavour henceforth to assist at Holy Mass with greater fervour and devotion than he has perhaps been accustomed to do in the past, and also more frequently. To this end, the following methods may be suggested.

I.

A good practice might be to take the various Ends for which it is offered, and put a different one before the mind, each time we hear Mass. If, for instance, we some day feel ourselves more than usually fervent and spiritual, we could spend the whole time of Mass in *adoring* the Goodness and Mercy and other attributes of God, recognizing His awful Majesty and Sanctity, while acknowledging our own nothingness before Him. It is well to unite our feeble effort of praise and adoration with the infinite worship of the Divine Victim on the Altar, that our united voices may rise in blended harmony before the eternal Throne, and our weakness be aided by His almighty power.

If we have just obtained an answer to our prayers, or received some other mark of God's favour, *thanksgiving* may well occupy our thoughts during the short half-hour of the Mass, which then becomes truly Eucharistic.

On another occasion, we may possibly see spiritual danger ahead of us, or have some temptation or trial to bear, some examination to pass, etc.; let us that morning humbly *petition* God to bestow on us the grace and strength we need, or grant success to our efforts and endeavours.

Some other time, it may happen that we are in sin, or at any rate that we feel more vividly the guilt of our past lives; let us profit by these salutary emotions to spend our time in *reparation* to God's offended Majesty, by repeated acts of heartfelt contrition, and let us offer Him His Divine Son on the Altar in atonement for our trespasses, and in propitiation of the wrath they have incurred.

Thus we can vary day by day, as circumstances may suggest, the objects for which we pray at Holy Mass. With some, this variation and change will be found useful to prevent monotony or routine, and such as find it to be so, may do well to keep to the practice.

## II.

Yet, as the Holy Sacrifice is offered for all these four ends, and so enables us to fulfill all our obligations to God, it may be wiser and more profitable to keep all four ends in at every Mass we hear. For this purpose, as an aid to memory and devotion, the Mass may naturally and conveniently be divided into four chief parts.

1. *Preparation* of the people. The first portion of the Mass, from the commencement down to the *Credo*, is called the "Mass of the Catechumens," for the reason already explained, and may be taken as our preparation for the Sacrifice. During this time, we should excite our hearts to feelings of humility and *contrition* for sin, so as to fit ourselves to assist worthily and profitably at the Divine Liturgy. Hence, acts of sorrow for sin, of reparation for the evil we have done, would most suitably occupy our attention, and serve as a fitting introduction to the more solemn parts of the Mass to follow.



2. *Offertory*, or preparation of the matter. This is the second division and extends from the *Credo* down to the *Sanctus*. Here the elements of the Mass are offered to God by the priest, namely, the bread and wine that are shortly to be transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of Christ. While the priest is making this offering, we too can offer ourselves to God to be ever His, both in time and eternity. Then we can make known to Him our varied wants, and *petition* Him for such graces as we desire. This will bring us down to the most sacred part of the Mass, the

3. *Canon*, which extends from the *Sanctus* to the *Pater Noster*. The prayers here are always said in secret, for greater reverence and respect due to the tremendous mystery effected at the Consecration, wherein Our Lord comes down on the Altar, in His veiled and sacramental form.

“O see, within a creature’s hand  
The vast Creator deigns to be!”

Nothing could be more becoming now than profound *adoration*, animated by lively faith in the Real Presence, adoration such as the shepherds paid to their new-born Saviour in Bethlehem.

4. *Communion* – The last part of the Mass is called the Communion, inasmuch as in this the priest receives his holy Communion, and consumes the Victim of the Sacrifice; it extends from the *Pater* down to the end. Here also the Faithful approach the Holy Table, if desirous of doing so; if they do not, they should at least endeavour to supply the omission, by making what we have already termed a Spiritual Communion, which, when rightly made, is very beneficial to the soul. During this last portion of the Mass, we should make acts of *thanksgiving* to God for all He has

done for us, not least, for permitting us to be present at the renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross, or perhaps even giving Himself to us in Holy Communion.

This second method of hearing Mass, by keeping the four ends of Sacrifice in view, is the better one, for then, at every Mass we hear, we fulfill the four-fold duty we owe to God. It should not be difficult, after a little while, to fall into the way of doing this; yet each one is free to follow any method, according as inclination or devotion may lead him.

There were three classes of people present on Calvary's height, as Our Lord sacrificed Himself for our redemption. First, there were those engaged in crucifying Him, and all who in various ways insulted Him, at the very time He was proving His yearning love for them. They were scoffers who derided Him, their hearts were hardened, and they heeded Him not. Then, there were others who, without wishing to offend, went there out of mere curiosity, to see what was doing, and learn the end of One who had been famous among them, by the miracles He had wrought, and the mercies He had bestowed. Lastly, there were the few followers of Our Saviour, who had been faithful to Him throughout, their hearts full of faith, love, and compassion. Foremost among these was of course His holy mother, the *Virgo dolorosa*, heart-broken at the sight of His sufferings; and with her were the holy women and the beloved disciple, Sain John.

The same classes that were seen on Calvary are often present also at the Sacrifice of the Mass. First, there are some who go in the state of grievous sin, without sorrow or determination to amend. Their souls are of course most displeasing to God, who knows their unhappy state; all the same, they must not neglect it, for, with good dispositions and intentions, it may be to them the means of true

repentance, and forgiveness of sin. For the same reason, they must on no account miss a Mass of obligation because of their souls being at variance with God for the moment; this would be to lose perhaps that very grace of conversion, apart from the fact that the omission would bring additional guilt to their souls. Then, there are some who go to Mass through unworthy motives, such as curiosity or vanity, to see and be seen; they long to know who are at church, how they dress and so forth, anxious also to be seen themselves and admired by others, no less thoughtless and distracted. While, lastly, others also are there, in great numbers, let us hope, animated with the most worthy dispositions of faith, love, and reverence, who assist with much profit at the Holy Sacrifice, and come away strengthened in grace, and enriched with merit for future reward. – Let it be our endeavour to take rank among these last, and so make some amends to our Divine Victim for the sins and failings of the others.

### III

Yet another method of attending Mass is common among the Faithful, most pleasing to Our Divine Lord and most helpful to ourselves. It is to pass the time in silent meditation on the Crucifixion and Death of the Son of God. We can in spirit place ourselves near the Cross, in company with Our Lady of Sorrows, reverently and attentively watch the scene of the dread Sacrifice, and expressing from time to time sentiments of compassion, thanksgiving, love, and contrition. If we find it difficult to prolong this meditation throughout the whole of Mass, we can aid our devotion, by reciting prayers in honour of the Passion, or by saying the sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary. If the Mass be a memorial of the Passion and Death of Our Lord, it follows that devotions in honour of the Passion are most in harmony with the august Sacrifice.

#### IV

Again: we may use the Ordinary of the Mass, that is, the very prayers that are being said by the officiating priest. We know that he is associated with Our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, in offering the Divine Sacrifice; he is acting with and for Christ, his prayers, therefore, are, in a sense, the words of Christ Himself. Can we, then, do better than unite with the priest and with Jesus Christ, in reciting the most appropriate prayers, ordained by the Church for this Divine act? The priest offers and prays: Jesus Christ unites Himself with him: let us then associate ourselves with both, in the selfsame offering and form of prayer.

#### V

As tastes and devotion in the Faithful vary so much, they may during Mass use any prayers which they find suitable to the bent of their minds, and helpful to devotion; for instance, the Litany of Jesus, or of the Sacred Heart; the penitential psalms; acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, and Contrition, etc.

The decrees of the Council of Trent impress upon us the reverence with which we must hear Holy Mass: "If we must needs confess that no other work can be performed by the Faithful so holy and divine as this tremendous mystery itself, ... it is also sufficiently clear that all industry and diligence is to be applied to this end, that it be performed with the greatest possible cleanness and purity of heart, and outward show of devotion and piety" (Sess. XXII.). From these words both priests and people may learn a lesson – the former to say Mass with all possible devotion, the latter to assist at it with all piety and fervour.

The Jewish historian Josephus states that seven hundred priests and levites served daily in the Jewish Temple: they slaughtered the victims, cut them to pieces, and burnt them at the altar; and yet, with all this, they preserved the utmost reverence and silence, so that it might almost be thought there was but one priest officiating.

Saint John Chrysostom says it was the same with the early Christians; as they crossed the threshold of the church, they stooped and kissed the ground, and the silence that prevailed during the celebration of the holy Mysteries could hardly have been greater had the Church been empty.

“Reverence My sanctuary,” said Almighty God to His people of old (Leviticus 26:2). With how much greater force will this command apply to the temples of the New Law, especially during the offering of Holy Mass. In church, therefore, we must be reverential and attentive, restraining our eyes, still more our tongues, and avoiding all vanity of dress and demeanour, lest we deserve to be treated as Our Lord treated those who bought and sold in the Temple (Luke 19:45). Very young children should be left at home and not brought to Mass, for they often disturb not only those who bring them, but other people also, and even the priest at the Altar. If they *must* be brought, let it be to an early Mass, and let parents endeavour to keep them quiet, above all not encourage their noise and restlessness, as some seem to do, to the great inconvenience of those around them.

Saint Paul says that “in the name of Jesus every knee should bow” (Philippians 2:10). How much more should we bend our knees when Jesus Himself is present before us, hence, out of reverence for the Holy Sacrifice, it is well to remain kneeling all the time of Low Mass, or at any rate at the more solemn part, from the Consecration to the Communion.

If we follow out the advice and suggestions here given, we shall resemble the faithful few who stood on Calvary, as Our Lord offered the first great Sacrifice on the Cross, and the graces we receive from Its renewal on our altars will be very great and precious.

# Fruits of the Mass

By *Fruits of the Mass* we mean the effects it produces as applied to men. The merits of the Victim in the Sacrifice may be directed in various ways to different people; hence we have a threefold kind of fruit, namely, the General, the Special, and the Principal.

1. By the *General Fruit* is meant the benefit which accrues to all the members of the Church, in so far as the Sacrifice is offered by the priest acting in the name of the Church. The Faithful all benefit by this, in virtue of the Communion of Saints, whereby all the members of the Church may and do assist each other by their prayers and good works. A larger share of this fruit will be obtained by those who have a closer connection with a particular Mass, as, for instance, by being present at it, and still more by ministering to the priest who says it; but, in every case, the measure of this fruit depends on the merit and devotion of each one.

2. The *Special Fruit* is that which belongs to the celebrant himself, just as special merit is gained by anyone who does any good work for God, being greater, again, in proportion to his actual dispositions and devotion.

3. The *Principal Fruit* is that which is gained by the person or persons for whom the Mass is offered, in the intention of the priest. The value of the Mass is infinite in itself, and cannot be exhausted in its application to men, for it is the same as the Sacrifice of Calvary; yet it is probable that the fruit of a Mass is determinate in quantity, so that, if offered for many, each would receive less than if it were offered for himself alone. In any case, two or more obligations for particular intentions may not be fulfilled by a single Mass. The application of this principal fruit must be the act of the will

of the priest who celebrates it, that is, he must predetermine and dispose of the fruit in favour of him for whom he offers the Mass.

When this personal benefit is asked for by any of the Faithful, it is customary to make an offering on the occasion of the request. In the early ages of the Church, offerings were made in kind, such as bread, fruit, wine, etc. In the course of ages, such offerings fell into disuse, and the Faithful began to make money offerings instead, towards the support of the Clergy, and this long established custom prevails at the present day. It is not, in any sense, a price paid for the Mass, as though it were being bought for money; this would be the hateful crime of simony, that is, buying or selling spiritual things for a temporal price or reward, and is named from Simon Magus, who offered money to the Apostles, that he also might have, like them, the power of bestowing the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands (Acts 8:18). Thus it is not a purchase, but an offering made as a means of support for the Clergy, on the occasion of the spiritual favour being granted.

In this country, the offering sanctioned by the Bishops of the Province of Westminster is five shillings, though, in the case of the many who cannot afford this sum, one-half is all that is expected. This is but a way of fulfilling the fifth precept of the Church: to contribute to the support of our pastors, a duty based on the Natural law of assisting those in temporal goods who devote their lives to our spiritual welfare; on the Divine law, as expressed by Saint Paul to the Corinthians: "The Lord ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel" (I Corinthians 9:14). And finally, on Ecclesiastical law, as seen in this fifth command of the Church, a principle confirmed even by the civil governments of the world.



The intentions of the Faithful, for which this application of the Principal Fruit may be asked, are as various as the spiritual and temporal wants of men. Sunday by Sunday, such intentions are announced for the Masses of the following week, whether for the living or the dead, either in specified form, or under the more general term of “private intention.”

Seeing that the Holy Sacrifice is the highest act of Religion, and honours God more than anything else we do, it should be the ambition of the Faithful, from time to time, as they are able, to secure for themselves this precious gift, and offer it to God in fulfillment of all their obligations, to call down His favour upon themselves, their homes and families, and to implore the great grace of a holy death. They should never neglect the sacred duty of having Holy Mass offered for their deceased relatives and friends and benefactors. That was the custom clearly inspired of God in the Old Testament, (see 2 Maccabees 12:43), though the only offering they could make then was the sacrifice of animals. And the same pious remembrance of the dead, by the offering of the Sacred Mysteries on our Altars, prevailed from the earliest ages of the Christian Dispensation. Too often is this “holy and wholesome thought ” of remembering the dead, and following them with our prayers and sacrifices, forgotten amongst us in the present day! Cases are not unknown where friends the truest and the best have been laid in their graves, with great display of worldly pomp and show, but without the grateful aid of a single Mass, or perhaps even a prayer, for the repose of their souls!

# **The Mass A Memorial**

## **1. The Incarnation and Birth of Our Lord**

Let us go in spirit to Nazareth of Galilee, and there enter into the peaceful home of Mary and Joseph. Mary is at prayer, when behold an angel in beauteous form stands before her, and, with respectful salutation, announces to her the tidings that she has been chosen to become the Mother of the World's Redeemer. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Our Blessed Lady, on thus learning the honour she was to receive of becoming the Mother of God, through the omnipotence of the Holy Ghost, bowed in all humility to the Divine Will, and exclaimed: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word." At that moment, when her consent was given, as expressed in these words, the Holy Spirit formed of her pure flesh and blood a perfectly organised body, an equally perfect soul was created for it, and the Son of God took them both, and united them to His own Divine Person; thus did He become man for us, the "Word was made flesh," to redeem mankind.

When the fullness of time arrived, Mary and Joseph, in obedience to an imperial decree, betook themselves to Bethlehem, the city of David, to whose royal line they both belonged; driven to take shelter in a stable, Mary there brought forth her Son, the Man-God, and fell on her knees to adore Him.

Consider now the Altar of a Catholic Church, where Holy Mass is being offered. The Sanctuary Bell has already announced that the solemn moment of Consecration is at

hand. At present there is on the Altar bread and wine only, to adore which would be pure idolatry. But now the priest pronounces the life-giving words of Consecration, and behold we have then the true Body and Blood of Our Redeemer, present under the Sacramental Veils, the selfsame that Mary's womb contained, after the Angel's word had been spoken, and her assent had been given. And no matter on how many altars all over the globe the Holy Sacrifice is offered, the same marvel is repeated, thus recalling the great mystery of the Incarnation. In it, Our Lord uses His omnipotence to make Himself man, while in the Mass He uses it to change bread and wine into Himself. In His birth, He conceals His Divinity under the form of His Humanity: in the Mass, He conceals both Divinity and Humanity under the elements of bread and wine.

If Bethlehem be a great place of pilgrimage, if a visit to the Cave wherein Our Lord was born fills the heart with tenderest emotion, at the thought of the great event that occurred there, how much more should the heart of a true Catholic be affected by the wondrous prodigy that takes place on the Altar! For there Our Lord is daily born again into the world in thousands of churches, by a miracle of love and power. Thus does Holy Mass truly become a memorial of Our Lord's Incarnation and Birth into our midst more than nineteen hundred years ago.

## **2. Life of Our Lord**

It is the duty of each one to form himself, as far as he can, on the Divine model which God Almighty has given us in the person of His own beloved Son made man. While He lived on earth, He practiced in His daily life, as well as taught by His words, all the Christian virtues He desired His followers to learn and imitate.

Now if we contemplate devoutly the mysteries of Holy Mass, and remember how the officiating priest represents Jesus Christ and reproduces the mysteries of His life, we shall surely be eager to assist frequently at the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, which is the compendium of that life.

Thus on the Altar we have the *same Divine Child* lying before us as lay in the Crib at Bethlehem, but under more lowly form, the form of bread and wine. – In the Gospel, though it be the priest that pronounces them, we have the very *words of Our Lord Himself*, and they have the same weight and authority now, as when He addressed them to the multitudes. – The miracle He once wrought in Cana is surpassed by the miracle of Consecration, which re-enacts daily the scene of the Last Supper. – Our Lord's *humility*, so conspicuous in His mortal life, stands clearly out before us in the lowliness of His mystic existence on the Altar. – The *obedience* He ever showed to His parents is renewed towards His priests, who move Him from place to place in His sacramental form, and to their will He freely submits. – The greater part of His life on earth was spent in *obscurity*, unknown to the world; in the poverty of His home in Nazareth, He unceasingly offered Himself as a living victim to the glory of His Father. So, on the Altar, Our Lord maintains this state of obscurity, lying there as victim, ignored by the greater part of men, too often unheeded even by His own followers.

Thus does Our Lord continue in the Holy Sacrifice the work of His visible career on earth, and renew in every Mass that is offered what it took Him thirty-three years to accomplish.

Think, then, once more what immense benefits may be derived from the hearing of Holy Mass. With what eagerness should we endeavour to assist at it! What fervour should animate our hearts, as we do so! How is it we are so

indifferent to this easy means of obtaining eternal treasures, while so keen to acquire temporal wealth? Only let us know and understand how the Mass renews Our Lord's life on earth and recalls His infinite perfections, then shall we have greater love and devotion in regard to it, and endeavour to copy in our lives the virtues of Our Lord, of which the Mass is the perpetual memorial.

### **3. Passion and Death of Christ**

It is of faith that the Holy Eucharist was instituted by Our Lord to perpetuate the memory of His Passion and Death. "Do this for a commemoration of Me," He said to His disciples, when annihilating Himself, as it were, under the appearances of bread and wine, and burying Himself wholly under the shroud of the sacred species, and these words are daily repeated after the Consecration. Saint Paul, on the other hand, reminds us that as often as we eat this bread and drink this chalice, we show forth the death of the Lord, till His second coming at the end of time (I Corinthians 11:26).

The Church teaches that the sacrifice of the Mass is the same as that of Calvary, which clearly shows how it is to us a memorial of all that our Lord suffered, when He first allowed Himself to be subject to the torments of His Agony and Death.

It is of great importance that men should ever remember this, because only by the application of Our Lord's merits, acquired in His Passion, can they ever hope to save their souls. Moreover, it is impossible that the Faithful could have been present on Calvary, but in the Mass they may earn the same graces and merits, as if they had stood with Mary and John, under the Cross on which Jesus died, because it is, and

always will be, the self-same Sacrifice renewed daily till the end of time.

How is this? The priest, by the omnipotent words of Consecration, calls down the Son of God upon the Altar, and encloses Him under the sacred species, devoid, as it were, of all movement, of all life and speech. And by the separate consecration of the bread and wine, and the apparent separation of the Precious Body and Blood, Our Lord is placed in a condition like unto death, though possessing life, for “Christ dieth now no more,” and yet unable to show external signs of life.

As in His Passion He was delivered into the hands of men, so in the Mass He is given to the will of those who keep Him in their custody, who can move Him from place to place, or retain Him as a prisoner of love in the Tabernacle.

The Holy Eucharist perpetuates the Passion and Death of Our Saviour, inasmuch as He is therein the Victim of the same treacheries and violence and humiliations as of yore. Judas *betrayed* Our Lord to His enemies; but bad communicants do the same, when receiving Him into their souls stained with grievous sin, souls wherein His archenemy dwells. *Violence* was done to Our Redeemer, as He was scourged and crowned with thorns; but violence is still offered to Him, when His Tabernacles are rifled and profaned by sacrilegious hands, when the sacred particles are trodden underfoot, or scattered about in contempt. And the *humiliations* of the Passion are repeated nowadays, in the blasphemies of Infidels, the ignorance of many Christians, by their grievous sins and ingratitude.

These saddening thoughts, based on facts too evident and too frequent in the world’s history, should lead us, the followers of the crucified Master, to the spirit and practice of

reparation. Let us then go to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, or assist at the Holy Sacrifice, and by our acts of atonement share the consolation and the honour of Veronica, who wiped the adorable face of Our Lord, of Simon, who helped Him to bear the Cross up the hillside of Calvary, of the Holy Women, who gave Him their sympathy and their tears, and especially of His Holy Mother, who offered Him the reparation of her intense and burning love. We can give Him our cordial “Hosannas” of praise for the cries of outrage and insult that fell upon His ears, as He hung on the Cross, and for the blasphemies against His real presence in our own day.

How many travel year by year in pilgrimage to Jerusalem, not indeed to witness Our Lord’s Passion and Death, but to see and honour the places where these terrible tragedies were enacted! How many go every decade to see the Passion Play among the Bavarian Highlands, and witness the representation of the scenes that filled in the last days of Our Lord’s mortal career! All return home from the Holy Land or Ober Ammergau deeply moved and impressed by what they have seen and heard, and delight to relate to their friends the many incidents that moved their hearts, and perhaps drew tears from their eyes.

Yet, if we remember that Holy Mass is the commemoration and memorial of the Passion of Christ and of His Death for our sins, nay more, is the very renewal of those sufferings, that He Himself is there reposing on the Altar by actual presence as the Divine Victim of sacrifice, how eager should we be to assist thereat, and witness the reality, here no longer a mere representation, as is the Passion Play in every tenth year! If we attend devoutly and frequently, we shall soon experience the benefits of so salutary a practice, joy and gladness will lighten our hearts, grace and strength will be imparted to us, and, weak though we be of ourselves, we

shall yet be able to resist the corruption of sin, through the power and sweetness of the incorruptible Blood of Jesus, shed over our souls.

“As often as thou sayest or hearest Mass, it ought to seem to thee as great, as new, and as delightful, as if Christ that same day . . . was hanging on the Cross, was suffering and dying for the salvation of men.” - *Imitation of Christ, IV, chapter 2*

“The statues of sovereigns have often served as asylums to men who flew for refuge to them, not because they were made of brass, but because they represented the persons of princes. In like manner, the blood of the Lamb saved the Israelites, not because it was blood, but because it prefigured the Blood of Our Saviour, and announced His coming. Now, then, if the enemy perceives, not the blood of the typical lamb on our doors, but the blood of the true Lamb shining on the souls of the Faithful, he will depart farther from us. For, if the angel of destruction passed by, where he saw the figure, how much more terrified will not the enemy be at beholding the reality.” - *Saint John Chrysostom*



# **Sacred Vestments and Vessels**

In the Old Law, God Himself gave minute instructions to Moses concerning the different vestments His ministers had to wear while serving the Altar. Full details may be read in the twenty-eighth chapter of the book of Exodus, while Leviticus treats at great length of the offices and ministries, rites and ceremonies of the Priests and Levites.

Even the pagan priesthood assumed special garments when offering sacrifice to their idols, or when performing the rites of their superstitious worship.

A natural sentiment suggests to man something similar in civil life; thus it is that we have the judge in the tribunal of justice and the barrister pleading before him, distinguished by their peculiar robes of office. When audience is given by Pope or King, etiquette requires that, on such formal occasions, those who are granted the favour of such audience should be becomingly attired, and dress according to the custom of the Court at which they present themselves.

Thus it is that, from almost the earliest ages of the Christian dispensation, the ministers of the Altar have used special garments and ornaments in carrying out the Liturgy, and various other services of the Church; and history tells how these costly vestments and sacred vessels became the object of the cupidity of the early persecutors. Both religion and propriety suggest the adoption of some distinctive garb for the Clergy, while occupied in the public functions of their ministry, whether in offering the Sacrifice, or in administering the Sacraments.

The wish of the Church in this is that both Pastor and People should conceive a high idea of the solemnity of God's service, and of all that appertains to His worship. She, therefore, requires her priests and various assistant ministers to lay aside their secular dress and array themselves in becoming vestments, whenever they approach the Altar for the celebration of the Divine Mysteries. She loves to see these vestments, etc., as rich and beautiful as means may allow, as also the various sacred vessels that are used in her services.

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## **1. Vestments**

It may first of all be stated that the everyday garment of the Clergy, to be worn at all times in the church is, the Cassock, over which he puts others when about to perform any religious ceremony. The cassock is black for priests, purple for bishops, scarlet for cardinals, and white for the Pope.

The Vestments used at ordinary Low Mass, that is, Mass without music or assistant ministers, are six in number, and have mostly come down from the days of the Apostles. They have had various symbolical meanings attached to them, and help to call to mind certain incidents of Our Lord's Sacred Passion. Before being used in so holy a work as the offering of the Mass, they must be blessed by the Bishop, or at least by a priest holding faculties to bless them in his stead. – The first of them is:

1. The *Amice*, a white linen cloth, nearly square, to cover the neck and shoulders. Formerly, it covered also the head, in place of the present biretta. This historical fact is recalled nowadays by the act of the priest in putting it on, for he touches the crown of his head with the amice, before laying it on his shoulders, while priests of the Dominican order to

this day wear it over their heads, in going to and from the Altar. It is as the “helmet of salvation” to enable the priest to resist the attacks of the evil One, as the prayer suggests that he says, while arranging it round his neck. Some see in the amice a reminder of the cloth with which Veronica wiped the face of Jesus, as He was on His way to Calvary, while to others it recalls His blindfolding by the soldiers, who smote Him and said: “Prophesy who it is that struck thee!” (Luke 22:64).

2. The *Alb* is the long and ample white garment of linen that reaches from the shoulders down to the ankles, the lower part of it being usually ornamented in a variety of ways. Its whiteness denotes the purity of soul and body that must adorn the priest, who undertakes so sublime a work as the offering of sacrifice to God, and it vividly recalls the white garment that Herod mockingly placed on Our Lord, when He sent him back to Pilate (Luke 23:11). – The *Surplice* and *Cotta* are merely the *Alb* in shorter form, and bear the same symbolical meaning.

3. The *Girdle*, formerly broad and flat, is the linen cord that gathers up the *Alb* at the waist. It suggests the girding of the loins, (Isaiah 11:5; Luke 12:35), or the restraint we must put on our evil inclinations, as expressed in the short prayer which the priest says while putting it on. It serves to recall the ropes with which the executioners bound Our Lord in the Garden, or fastened Him to the column of flagellation. Though usually white, it may lawfully be of the same colour as the vestments with which it is used.

4. The *Maniple* was originally a cloth, intended for ordinary use, as a napkin or handkerchief, for wiping away perspiration from the face or brow, occasioned by the heat, or by the labours of the ministry; but by the twelfth century, the piety of the Faithful had led them to ornament it to such

an extent, that it could no longer serve its original purpose. With her conservative instinct, however, the Church retained it as one of her liturgical vestments, and gave to it a symbolical meaning: a reminder to the priest of toil and labours of life, and of the reward that awaits him hereafter, if he bear them in patience for God. It is worn on the left arm, and represents the bonds Our Saviour was placed in, the night before He died.

5. The *Stole* is the long band, of same material as the maniple and chasuble, that rests on the priest's neck, and hangs down to about the knees. For Mass, it is crossed on the breast and held in position by the girdle, though, in the case of a Bishop, it is allowed to hang without crossing, as he already has his pectoral cross on his breast. The stole still further symbolizes the cords that bound Our Saviour, as He was dragged up to Calvary. It represents to us the yoke of Christ, which is sweet and light, and should be cheerfully taken up by His followers. It likewise denotes authority; hence the priest wears it while preaching the Word of God, and while administering any of the sacraments.

6. The *Chasuble* is the uppermost of all the vestments worn at Mass, representing the garment Our Lord had placed upon Him, when He was being derided as "King of the Jews" (John 19:3). It also recalls the Cross He bore on His shoulders on His way to death, for the Chasuble usually has a large cross on the back.

For over a thousand years it covered the whole body, and had to be raised at the sides to allow the arms freedom of motion, in performing the ceremonies of the Mass. When heavier and more precious material came to be used in the making of the Chasuble, and ornamentation was also added, it was found to be very cumbersome and inconvenient to lift up, so the sides were somewhat cut away, till at length its

present form gradually came into use. It is the noblest of all the sacerdotal garments, and Alcuin, our fellow-countryman of the ninth century, regarded it as emblematical of Charity – love of God and man – charity that covereth a multitude of sins, for the Chasuble, in his day, covered the entire person of the priest.

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A word should here be said on two other ornaments required at Mass, though they be in no sense vestments.

The *Chalice Veil* is the square of flexible material which the priest places over the Chalice, when he carries it to the Altar for Mass. It remains on it till the Offertory, when it is taken off and laid on the epistle side of the Altar till after the ablutions; then it is replaced on the Chalice, and, after Mass, carried back to the Sacristy. The antiquity of the Chalice Veil is very great, and probably goes back as far as the fourth century. It is always of the same material and colour as the vestments with which it is used, and generally has a cross worked on the upper side.

The *Burse* is a square pocket, formed of two pieces of cardboard, covered again with the same material as the Veil, and rests on the veil. In this pocket is placed, for use during Mass, the Corporal, a square of linen, whereon the Chalice and Particle remain, from the Offertory till the priest's Communion, the burse itself meanwhile standing to the left of the Tabernacle.

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To complete this subject, the *Cope* should also be named; it is not a vestment used for Mass, but it has a close relation to the Blessed Sacrament, inasmuch as it is worn by the priest at Benediction, of which something will be said later on. The Cope is an ample sleeveless vestment, made of silk or other

similar material, reaching from the neck down to the feet. It thus covers the whole body of the priest, something like the early Chasuble, except that the Cope is open in front, being held in position by a morse, or some sort of clasp on the breast. Formerly, it bore a hood at the back to cover the head in processions; this, however, is now a merely ornamental appendage, highly adorned, and usually edged with fringe. The Copes are made of the same various colours as the Vestments for Mass, but white is always its colour when used at Benediction. Unlike the Chasuble, the Cope may be worn by others than the Clergy, for instance, by the Cantors at Vespers.

While the priest is giving the blessing at Benediction he wears on his shoulders the *Humeral Veil*, with which, for greater reverence, he covers his hands, when taking the Monstrance, for the blessing of the people. A similar Veil is worn by the sub-deacon during a good portion of High Mass.

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In all these various Vestments which the Church requires us to use in connection with the Blessed Sacrament, we may clearly see how anxious she is to show reverence to It, and to inspire respect for all her services. As God in the Old Law was so particular and exacting as to the garments of those who were to offer Him Sacrifice and praise, so, too, is the Church in regulating her sacred Liturgy. Be it therefore our endeavour to profit by the lessons she here inculcates, by ever showing becoming honour and veneration, whenever we are privileged to assist at any of the Church's functions. We may also show our zeal for the glory of God's Sanctuary by helping to provide the Vestments that are necessary, and by making them as worthy of their object as our means may allow.

## **2. Colours of the Vestments**

From the earliest times, colours have had symbolical meanings attached to them, and have ever been used to excite varied feelings in the minds of men. In the Old Testament there are innumerable instances, in which God gave to Israel minute instructions regulating the colours of such things as were connected with the services of the Tabernacle, etc.

In the first years of the Christian Church, only two colours were in use, white and red, and it was only gradually that the liturgical colours of the present day came to be employed. From the time of Pope Innocent III, in the twelfth century, five different colours for the vestments of the Mass have been recognized, and later on became obligatory, to the exclusion, generally, of all others. These colours were, and still are, White, Red, Green, Purple, and Black.

1. *White* – White signifies the fullness of light, and is typical of Our Lord, who is the Sun of justice and the Light of the world; it is the emblem of Heaven’s enchanting beauty and the symbol of perfect joy. Hence, white is the colour used on the festivals of Our Saviour, excluding such as commemorate His sufferings; on the feasts of the Blessed Virgin, the flower of wondrous purity and brightness, clothed with the sun, as Queen of the Angels; also on the feasts of Confessors, Virgins, and saintly women who have adorned the Church with the radiance of their purity and sanctity.

2. *Red* – Its warmth symbolizes fire, while its colour is that of blood. Thus it is appropriately used on Pentecost, the feast of the Holy Ghost, who is the burning love of God, and came down upon the Apostles in the form of “tongues as it were of fire”; on the feasts of Our Lord’s Passion; on feasts of the Holy Cross; and finally of the Apostles and Martyrs, who shed their blood in defense of the Faith.

3. *Green*, the emblem of hope, is the colour of the earth in the spring, when all nature revives, when the grass and the trees bud forth, putting on their brightest green, and bringing hope to the hearts of men. Now, our hope of eternal life is based on the Resurrection of Our Lord, which has ever been honoured by the Church on Sunday. Hence, green is the colour used in the offices of Sunday, unless some other office for any reason takes precedence, and requires another colour.

4. *Purple*, in the eyes of the Church, is the symbol of penance and atonement; hence, she naturally prescribes its use in such seasons as Advent and Lent, on Ember Days and certain Vigils, except again that Feasts may sometimes take precedence, with colours peculiar to themselves.

5. *Black* is the fifth of the liturgical colours. It is the absence of light and therefore of joy, and suggestive of sorrow and death. Consequently, it is used on Good Friday, when the whole Church mourns the memory of her Saviour's death on the Cross, which, though it brought salvation and joy to the human race, yet involved humiliation, agony, and death upon Jesus Christ. A similar thought is suggested in the office of the Dead. Death leaves mourning and anguish behind it, and the Church, with the tenderness of a mother, shares, in her religious functions, the sorrows of her children's bereavements, and in *Requiem* Masses wears black vestments, as sign of her sympathy with their grief, and of her own mourning for her departed children. In the burial of infants, however, not the black stole of sorrow is used, but the white stole of joy, in that, having died in the innocence of their baptism, they already possess the joys of Heaven, which should not be the cause of sadness or sorrow.

These are the five liturgical colours now in use in the Church, though it must be added that Vestments of real



cloth of gold may be used instead of white, red, or green, but not of purple or black.

It might be useful to us, if, whenever we assist at Holy Mass, we could try and enter into the spirit of the moment, as suggested by the colour of the Vestments then in use, endeavouring to excite within ourselves the various sentiments they symbolize, whether of sadness or joy, whether of reparation for the past or of hope for the future.

### **3. Sacred Vessels**

Something must now be said of the Sacred Vessels that are used in connection with the Blessed Sacrament, though it may hardly be necessary to refer to them at any great length. They may be reckoned as six in number.

1. The *Chalice* is the Eucharistic cup used at Mass, in which the wine is placed for consecration. Our Lord Himself used some such vessel at the Last Supper, as we read in the Gospel of Saint Matthew 26:27. That individual Chalice, as some maintain, was the one used by Melchisedech, and is preserved at Valencia in Spain, where it is held in the highest veneration, as it well may be, if it really be the Chalice used by Our Lord. According to the present discipline of the Church, the Chalice must be made of gold or silver; at the least the cup must be, the inner part of which must always be gilt. In the very early days, especially during the persecutions, chalices were made of other materials; but reverence requires and the Church now insists that they be of one or other of the two precious metals, and not infrequently are they very richly ornamented as well. In every case, the Chalice must be consecrated by a Bishop, who uses chrism for the purpose, according to the form given in the *Pontificale*, after which the sacred vessel may not be touched, except by persons in Holy Orders.

2. The *Paten* is the small plate of gold or silver, on which the particle of bread is laid that is to be consecrated at Mass; it thus becomes a figure of the Cross, on which Our Lord's body was laid for crucifixion. This, too, must be consecrated like the Chalice, after which only those in Holy Orders may handle it.

The reverence the Church has ever shown in consecrating Chalice and Paten, which come into immediate contact with the Body and Blood of Our Lord in the Holy Sacrifice, and the great care she has always displayed as to their safe custody, are a powerful argument of her general and ancient belief in the Real Presence after the Consecration.

3. The *Ciborium* is something like the Chalice, except that the cup is usually larger, but more shallow, and has a lid to it, covered with a silken veil. It is used to preserve the smaller consecrated breads, to be given to the Faithful in Holy Communion. When thus containing the Blessed Sacrament it is always placed under lock and key in the tabernacle. Hence the custom of pious souls to make visits of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament thus preserved; hence, too, the reason for the ever burning Lamp before the Altar, to which reference has already been made in these pages. The same faith which leads the Church to insist on the precious metals being used for Chalice and Paten, guides her also in making the Ciborium as rich as means will allow; but because it is not used for the Sacrifice, it is not consecrated, but merely blessed before use. This holds true also of the following.

4. The *Monstrance* – From the Latin word *monstrare*, to show, we have the name monstrance, a large vessel in which the Blessed Sacrament is exposed and shown to the people at Benediction, or is carried in solemn procession on greater festivals. It has a large base and stem, and on its upper part,

rays are represented as darting forth from a circular aperture in the centre, in which the Sacred Host is placed. These rays may recall to our minds the divine splendour of Our Lord's face, during His transfiguration on Mount Thabor (Matthew 17:2). The Monstrance first came into use about the time of the institution of the feast of Corpus Christi, in the thirteenth century.

5. The *Lunette* is the smaller vessel actually holding the Blessed Sacrament, and fits into the circular aperture just referred to. After Benediction, it is replaced in the Tabernacle.

6. Lastly, there is the *Pyx*, about the size and shape of a small watch case, in which the priest carries Holy Communion to the sick. In doing this, he places it in a silken burse, which he carries suspended on his breast by a cord passing round his neck.

As in the Vestments, so also in the sacred Vessels of the Altar, the Faithful should take a practical interest, by endeavouring to provide their church with at least a reasonably good and valuable set, so that everything about the Altar and Sanctuary may be redolent of the earnest faith of priest and people who worship there, which will react on their hearts and strengthen that faith, recalling to their minds the Real Presence, for whose honour they have made sacrifices to provide of their best.

#### **4. The Altar, and its Appurtenances**

When Noah came forth from the ark, after the waters of the Deluge had subsided, he immediately hastened to erect an altar, whereon to offer sacrifice to God, in acknowledgment of His supreme dominion, and in gratitude for his own marvellous preservation from destruction (Genesis 8:20).

From that day forward, we often read in Holy Writ of the use of altars. Throughout the Catholic world also, from Apostolic days down to the present time, wherever churches have been built to the glory of God, they have contained one or more altars for the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries, so that Altar and Sacrifice are correlative terms, that is, each one implies the other.

*Altar* – In the early days of persecution, altars were for the most part made of wood only, and it was not till peace had been given to the Church, under Constantine, the first Christian emperor, in the fourth century, that more durable and more precious materials could be used in the making of them, without fear of molestation or desecration. In the Catacombs, the Pontiffs offered Holy Mass over the tombs of the Saints, and especially of the Martyrs, whence arose the custom, which later became and still is the law, that the Holy Sacrifice may not be offered except on a stone containing relics of the Saints.

If the whole table of the Altar cannot be of stone or marble, a stone, at least large enough to conveniently hold the Chalice and the Bread, must be let into the wooden table in the centre, and the Altar or Altar Stone must be solemnly consecrated by a Bishop, before it may be used. It is of strict obligation that the Altar be covered with three linen cloths, the uppermost of which must not only cover the table, but also hang down at both sides and reach to the ground. That portion of it which hangs down in front of the length of the Altar is usually ornamented with some religious emblems or sacred words. These cloths must be blessed, for the Church employs nothing in her services that is not dedicated to God by prayer. “Every creature . . . is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (I Timothy 4:5).

The right and left hand sides of the Altar are now spoken of with reference to the Crucifix; thus, the right side is that on the right hand of the figure on the Cross, the Gospel side; the left side, that on the left hand of the figure, the Epistle side.

The Altar symbolises Our Lord Himself, or again the hill of Calvary, whereon the first great Sacrifice was offered.

*Tabernacle* – This is the name given to a sort of small temple erected in the centre of the Altar. It has had a variety of forms during the length of its history, but now generally consists of an iron safe, let into a casing of the wood, marble, or alabaster of which the Altar itself is made. Herein the Holy Eucharist, under the form of bread, is reserved for the use of the Faithful. Hither they may come and pay homage to their Sacramental Lord; from it He is taken and exposed to their view at Benediction, and from it, too, is carried to the homes of the sick and the dying, who cannot receive Him at the Altar.

*Candlesticks*, three in number, are placed on each side of the Tabernacle, on the High or principal Altar. In the days of persecution, when the assemblies of the Faithful were held before the dawn, artificial light was necessary for them; but the early Christians soon came to give the candles thus used a symbolical meaning, and when peace was restored to the Church, candles continued in use during the Sacred Mysteries, even when now performed in the full light of day. These lights are used in sign of spiritual joy, as was remarked by S. Jerome, so far back as the fourth century. They also fittingly represent Our Lord, who is the Light of the world that “enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world” (John 1:9). They serve also to remind us that we too should be as a light to the world around us, through the good example we should give, leading men to glorify our

Father who is in Heaven. These candles must be made mainly of pure beeswax, and must be blessed before use.

*Lights* were employed in the services of the Jewish Temple, and from this the Church borrowed her practice. As in the Mass we have indeed the most abundant cause for joy, two candles at least are absolutely required for its lawful celebration, so much so that if none can be procured, it may not be said, not even on a Sunday.

*Flowers* – There is one place on earth that can never be too richly adorned, as was remarked in a previous chapter, and that is the sanctuary where Our Lord dwells amongst us. Nothing that we can do for Him can be too beautiful, and though He has no need of our gifts, He vouchsafes to accept such as we may be able to offer, as proof of our faith and devotion. As God Himself decks the earth with flowers of every shape and hue, so may we adorn His dwelling-place with such flowers as may be had, “love’s truest language.” The Faithful are urged to provide plants and flowers for the Altar and the sanctuary, especially on the greater festivals of the year, flowers that may waste their innocent lives away, as a prayer to God in their behalf; they should feel proud, honoured, and privileged in being allowed to contribute to the beauty of God’s House. Only during penitential seasons and at the office for the Dead, should flowers fail to be seen. Both as regards candles and flowers, the Faithful have many opportunities of testifying their zeal and their faith, for they can be procured in large quantities or small, to suit the tastes and the purses of everyone.

A *Crucifix*, or representation of Christ crucified, must be placed on the Tabernacle, and on any altar, where Holy Mass is offered. From the very birth of Christianity, the Faithful used to make the Sign of the Cross on themselves, but it was not for long years that the Church ventured to exhibit the

Crucifix; she was most cautious not to offend her converts, by showing them the image of our dying Saviour, for the Pagans always held the cross in horror, and anyone who died on a cross was regarded as most ignominious and contemptible: "Unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness" (I Corinthians 1:23). In course of time, however, the Cross and the Crucifix came to be displayed in public, and especially on churches, both inside and out. As the Altar is the emblem of Calvary, the representation of Christ crucified finds a fitting place upon it, and thus we have again a memorial of His sufferings for our redemption. Every Catholic home, in like manner, should have a Crucifix within its walls, to enable those who dwell there to exercise their faith, hope, and love in Him, especially in times of trial, sickness, and death.

The *Altar Cards*, three in number, simply contain in separate form, for convenience' sake, certain prayers, etc., said in almost every Mass, without the need of referring each time to

The *Missal*, or *Mass Book*. This is the large volume, resting on a stand, that contains all the prayers, hymns, and extracts from Holy Scripture, constituting the Liturgy. Some of these are said in every Mass, and are known as the "Common" of the Mass, e.g., the *Kyrie*, *Sanctus*, etc. Others vary from day to day, and constitute the "Proper" of the Mass, e.g., the Introit, Collects, Epistle, and Gospel.

The *Bell*. In the book of Exodus 18:35, and in Ecclesiasticus 45:11, we read that by the ordinance of God, when Aaron entered or left the Sanctuary, little bells of gold, attached to his garments, should ring, to recall the minds of the children of Israel to what was going on, and inspire them with reverence for the services of the Temple.

At the Mass, a bell is rung (gently, it should be) at certain times for a similar reason, as an admonition to the people, that they redouble their fervour and devotion at the more solemn parts of the Service. The Rubrics speak of a small bell, and a single one only. Thus, strictly speaking, chimes are not altogether to the mind of the Church, nor is the gong, however devotional and impressive the sound it gives, when properly struck, which unfortunately is not always the case.

The bell is rung first of all at the *Sanctus*, giving warning that the Canon of the Mass is about to begin. Then, again, at the twofold Elevation; the object here is to rouse the attention and piety of the Faithful, that those who may be unable to see or hear the priest, or perchance are just then distracted, may be reminded of the most solemn act of the Sacrifice, as though it would say to each one present: "The Lord is nigh, come let us adore," or, better still: "The Master is come and calleth for thee" (John 11:28). When, then, we hear this call, at the sound of the bell, let us arise from distractions and present our homage to the Son of God, coming down upon the Altar. The Bell at this moment should also typify the spiritual joy we ought to feel at this new mystical birth of Our Saviour, as the Angels sang a hymn of joy at His temporal birth in Bethlehem.

Only at the *Sanctus* and at the Elevation do the Rubrics direct the Bell to be rung; custom, however, in this country at least, rings it when the priest spreads his hands over the Chalice, just before the Consecration, and again at the *Domine, non sum dignus*; this last serves to remind the Faithful to go up now to the Altar, if they desire to receive Holy Communion.

From the *Gloria* on Maundy Thursday to the same on Holy Saturday, the Bell is not used at the Altar. During that time



the Church is mourning over the passion and death of her Saviour; the joyousness of the Bells would be quite out of keeping with her ceremonies of these days, hence they remain silent.

The *Sanctuary Lamp* has already been spoken of, and is only here referred to as completing the appurtenances of the Altar.

# Prayers and Ceremonies of the Liturgy

To an unaccustomed eye, the Ritual of the Holy Sacrifice might appear very intricate and bewildering, a long tissue of prayers and ceremonies. This, however, will not be so, if we take some little pains to learn the meaning of such prayers and ceremonies. The Council of Trent insistently urges the necessity of the Faithful being instructed in all that concerns the Holy Sacrifice, and requires the priest to explain it to them (Sess. XXII., c. viii.).

A chapter, therefore, must be devoted to the subject of the Ceremonies, Prayers, and other portions of the Mass. It is a point of great importance that the Faithful should have a clear understanding of what goes on at the Altar during the Holy Sacrifice, so that the intellect being enlightened, the heart may be inflamed with love towards God for the Sacred Mysteries enacted in our midst. No deep research or learning is required in the bulk of the Faithful nor is the writer qualified to give them. But in accordance with the title of this little work, simple explanations and developments may be here presented to the reader, to complete what has been said above, to enable him to take an intelligent interest in what he sees, and so be able to give some reason for the faith that is in him, and, when asked a question on the subject, give a satisfying answer.

During the early persecutions, the Church spent weary years in weaving together the present web of the Sacred Liturgy, whereby to surround the Divine Mysteries with becoming stateliness and splendour. She evolved the rite of Holy Mass, as we know it today, in all its essential features, so that outward signs and ceremonies might speak to the inward

sense. In lessons taken from Holy Writ, she poured out her heart in praise and prayer, inspired utterances recurring in her services, "like gems threaded on a golden cord." The Liturgy, the full service of God, satisfies the highest aspirations of the heart. It leads us on from the full confession of sin at the foot of the Altar, through the ceremonious singing of Epistle and Gospel, Creed and Preface, to the thrilling climax of the Consecration. "Then all the people together made haste and fell down to the earth upon their faces, to adore the Lord their God, and to pray to the Almighty God the most High" (Ecclesiasticus 1:19).

The Chapter devoted to this explanation must necessarily be somewhat long, hence it may be well to divide it into four parts, corresponding with the fourfold division already made above. It must be premised that Solemn High Mass, with ministers and choir, is the standard on which the rubrics are based. Thus, High Mass is not simply a Low Mass with ceremonies added, but rather is Low Mass the Liturgy shorn of its splendour and stately ceremonial. In the early Church, scarcely any but High Mass was known, hence its being the Church's standard, when dealing with the question of ceremonies.

### **Preparation - From the Beginning down to the Creed**

When the priest is vested and ready to say Mass, he proceeds with chalice in hand from the Vestry to the Altar, where he genuflects, or bows profoundly, according as the Blessed Sacrament is, or is not, present thereon.

Genuflection implies an exterior act of respect and humility, very favourable to the spirit of prayer and penance, which bowing, in its own measure, also signifies; in the latter half of the Mass, both are frequent. He then ascends the step, arranges the chalice, and opens the Missal at the required place. He returns once more to the foot of the Altar to

humble himself before God, as His unworthy minister, and begins Mass by making on himself the Sign of the Cross, invoking the most Holy Trinity in the usual form of words.

The Sign of the Cross is of very ancient use in the Church, probably going back even to the days of the Apostles, and some assert that Our Lord Himself used it to bless them, as He rose in the air and ascended into Heaven. It is made some fifty times over during the Holy Sacrifice, and is frequently used in the administration of the Sacraments, and in all the Church's blessings, excepting that of the Paschal Candle. An indulgence of fifty days may be gained by making it devoutly on ourselves, and saying the words as we do so. We should endeavour, therefore, to make it thoughtfully and with reverence; it will then help to enliven our faith, strengthen our hope, and nourish our charity and love of God; especially should we make it in time of trial or temptation, for the Devil was overcome by the Cross, hence he fears it greatly, and is put to flight by its use.

The words that accompany the making of the Sign were spoken by Our Lord Himself, as given at the end of Saint Matthew's Gospel, 28:19. They give us an accurate description of the Holy Trinity, one God in three Divine Persons. It is quite congruous and becoming to make here the Sign of the Cross, and invoke the three Holy Persons, for the Mass is a memorial of Calvary, and gives to the ever Blessed Trinity more glory and praise than any other act of Religion.

The *Amen* ("be it so") that follows is a Hebrew word expressing a desire that our prayers may be heard in God's name. On the Cross of Calvary, whereon Our Lord died, Pilate wrote a title: "The writing was Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews ... and it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in

Latin" (John 19:19,20). This is the origin of the letters we often find on a crucifix: I.N. R.I.

Now, the same three languages are found also in the Mass, and thus we have at the very outset another reminder of the Sacrifice of the Cross.

The Hebrew is represented by this word *Amen*, so frequently used throughout, from beginning to end. Other Hebrew words are *Cherubim*, *Seraphim*, *Sabaoth*, *Hosanna*, and the frequent *Alleluia*.

The Greek is represented by the *Kyrie* and *Christe, eleison*; and

The Latin, by the rest of the Liturgy, at least in the Western Church.

After this beginning, the Priest and Server recite alternately the verses of the forty-second psalm of King David, *Judica me, Deus*. It is a psalm of gladness and joyful longing, expressing the desire of the royal prophet for the Altar and Temple of God, a desire that should animate the priest in like manner, as he stands at the foot of the Altar, like the Publican in the Temple, yet full of confidence and hope. This psalm is omitted in Masses of the Dead, and during Passiontide, as being unsuitable to such occasions of grief and penance, while some Religious Orders never say it at all.

The psalm ends with the *Gloria Patri*. The first part of it is supposed to have been framed by the Apostles, while the other part dates probably from the Council of Nicea, held a.d. 325, in condemnation of Arius, who taught that the Son was not from the beginning, nor equal in all things to the Father. This Doxology, as it is called, terminates nearly all the psalms, as used in the Divine Office, and should be said

with head bowed down and in all reverence, as an act of faith in the dogma of the Blessed Trinity.

Then the priest recites the *Confiteor* – the “I confess,” acknowledging his sinfulness before God and His Saints, and His unworthiness to approach the Altar; he asks pardon of his offences, which is one of the ends, of sacrifice, and he also begs the Saints to pray to God for him for that purpose. Here we have a distinct profession of faith in that consoling doctrine of the Church, the Communion of Saints, whereby we of the Church Militant on earth can appeal to the members of the Church Triumphant in Heaven for the help of their prayers in our behalf. Such invocation is authorised in many places of Holy Writ, both in the Old Testament and the New. While saying the *Confiteor*, (which has been in use from the eighth century,) the priest profoundly bows his body, and strikes his breast thrice, imitating the humble Publican, who “would not so much as lift up his eyes towards Heaven, but struck his breast saying: O God, be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). Confession of sin always preceded sacrifice, even in the Old Law.

Then the Server repeats the *Confiteor*, for and in the name of the Faithful; it must always be remembered that the Server throughout represents the Congregation present at the Mass.

A few ejaculatory prayers follow, the last of which is *Dominus vobiscum*, “The Lord be with you,” an expression that occurs several times during the course of the Mass; this is the first greeting of the priest to the people, wishing them the grace and blessing of God. It is the same as is found in the Book of Ruth 2:4: “Booz said to the reapers: the Lord be with you; and they answered him: the Lord bless thee.” Through the Server the people reply, *Et cum spiritu tuo*, “and with thy spirit,” O priest – an expression taken from the

second epistle of Saint Paul to Timothy 4:22 – a mutual salutation between priest and people.

Then the priest slowly goes up to the Altar, earnestly praying, as he does so, that God would purify his heart and make him worthy to enter the Holy of Holies. He next bows down and kisses the Altar, which symbolizes Jesus Christ, as an act of love and reverence towards Him and the relics of the Martyrs, which, as we have seen, must always be found there.

Proceeding now to the Epistle side, he reads from the Missal what is called the Introit, or entrance, to the Mass, all that has gone before being taken as the introduction thereto. The Introit usually consists of a passage from Holy Scripture. This was formerly followed by one of the psalms, but, when the prayers of the Mass were shortened, the first verse only of the psalm was retained, concluding with the *Gloria Patri*, after which the Introit is repeated, as a sort of antiphon to the psalm. In Masses for the Dead, etc., the *Gloria Patri* is always omitted, its tone being one of gladness and joy.

Formerly, the *Kyrie, eleison* was said at the Epistle corner, and the custom survives even yet at High Mass; at Low Mass, it is said at the middle of the Altar, before the Crucifix. It is a threefold cry for mercy addressed to the three persons of the Blessed Trinity, and is appropriately used at the beginning of Mass, begging the grace to offer it, or assist at it, in worthy dispositions.

The *Gloria in excelsis* has been called the Angelic Hymn, because its opening words are those sung by the Angels on the first Christmas night, as they announced the birth of the world's Redeemer to the Shepherds, watching their flocks on the hillside near Bethlehem (Luke 2:14). The remainder of the hymn, dating back as far as the Council of Nicea, a.d.

325, forms a sublime melody of pious aspirations, composed by various pastors and doctors of the Church, whose very names remain quite unknown to the world. It addresses the three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and it contains the four objects of sacrifice: Adoration (*adoramus Te*): Thanksgiving (*gratias agimus tibi*): Propitiation (*miserere nobis*): and Supplication (*suscipe deprecationem nostram*).

This glorious hymn, so majestic and beautiful, when first admitted as part of the Liturgy, was restricted exclusively to the feast of Christmas. Afterwards its use was extended to other festivals, but even then confined to Bishops only, till at last it came into general use on all feast days and by all priests.

We may naturally expect to learn that a hymn, so expressive of joy and gladness, would have no place in Masses for the Dead, nor during penitential seasons, except on feast days occurring then: and this we really find so to be. At the end of this hymn, the priest once again uses the greeting, *Dominus vobiscum*, but in doing so, he this time turns and faces the people. Whenever he thus turns towards the congregation, he first of all kisses the Altar, as though receiving from Jesus Christ typified thereby the kiss of peace and all blessings, which he then opens his hands to pour out on his people.

Then comes the *Collect* of the day. This, a principal prayer of the Mass, varies according to the festival, or the mystery, of the day, and is nearly always addressed to God the Father, as Our Lord Himself used to do, when on earth, and it begs graces and favours through the intercession of the Saint whose feast is being kept, or through the merits of some incident in Our Lord's life being then commemorated. Following the wish of the Apostle (Colossians 3:17), the



Church concludes her prayers and petitions in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

It often happens that more than one collect is said; for a secondary feast may fall on the same day, and of it a commemoration is made. A Vigil may also coincide with the feast, or an Octave may be running", and of these likewise a commemoration is made, while, again, the Bishop, for some grave cause, may order a prayer to be added in the Mass, for some days or weeks together; thus the number of collects will vary according to these different circumstances. It may be added, that some of the collects are among the most beautiful of the Church's prayers, both in the sentiments they contain and in the language wherein they are expressed, and many are of very ancient date.

While reading the collects and other prayers of the Mass, the priest, when his hands are not otherwise engaged, raises them upwards, according to a long established and impressive custom. It was thus that Moses prayed on the mountain for his people, as they were fighting against the Amalekites in the plain (Exodus 17:11). In different parts of the psalms, David makes frequent reference to the custom, which is thus shown to be very ancient. Our Lord prayed with extended arms on the Cross, and the practice was adopted by the primitive Christians, as early documents in writing and the paintings in the Catacombs clearly show, but it is one that is seldom seen nowadays.

After the Collects, comes the *Epistle*, or Lesson. The Jews, on their Sabbath day, used to read passages from the books of Moses and the Prophets (Acts 13:15). This example the first Christians followed, by reading extracts from the Scripture during Divine worship on Sunday, chiefly, though not exclusively, from the epistles of Saint Paul. As Our Lord used to send some of His disciples before Him to those places He

was about to visit, so the Church reads first from the writings of the Apostles, before coming to the Gospel, which contains the teachings of Our Lord Himself. The present arrangement of the Epistles and Gospels throughout the year, was made by Saint Jerome, at the request of Pope Damasus, in the fourth century. At the end of the Epistle, the Server answers *Deo gratias*, "Thanks be to God," for the gift of His holy doctrine and spiritual nourishment contained therein.

Then comes the *Gradual*, a sort of transition from the Epistle to the Gospel, consisting usually of two or more verses from the psalms.

On five different occasions, the Gradual is followed by a *Sequence*, or hymn, suitable to them. Formerly they were more numerous, but now five only are found in the Roman Missal. They are all of them very beautiful, and because well known deserve to be at least mentioned here. They are: the *Victimae Paschali*, for Easter Day; *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, on Pentecost; Saint Thomas of Aquin's *Lauda, Sion*, on Corpus Christi; the *Stabat Mater*, on the feast of the Seven Dolours; and the *Dies irae*, in Masses of the Dead.

Here the Missal is taken from the left-hand side of the Altar to the right, as being the more honourable. "Mystically, this ceremony is intended to remind us of the translation of the Word of God from the Jews, represented by the Epistle side, to the Gentiles, represented by the Gospel side, in accordance with what is said by Saints Paul and Barnabas, in the Acts of the Apostles 13:46: 'To you it behooved us first to speak the word of God: but, because you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we turn to the Gentiles.' The bringing back of the Missal afterwards denotes the final return of the Jews to Christianity, at the preaching of Enoch and Elias." - *Durandus*. Meanwhile, the priest bows down before the Crucifix, saying a prayer

wherein he begs, out of reverence for the Word of God, that his lips and heart may be cleansed, in order worthily to announce –

The *Gospel*, taken from Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, Saint Luke, or Saint John. Here the people rise and stand, expressing thereby their respect for the Divine Word, and their readiness to obey its commands. The priest makes a small sign of the Cross, with his thumb, on the opening words of the Gospel, implying it is the book of Jesus crucified. Then a triple cross upon himself, on his forehead, his lips, and his heart, wherein the Faithful should imitate him, symbolizing their resolve to profess boldly the doctrine of the Gospel, to confess it with their lips, and to love it with their hearts. At the conclusion, the priest kisses the sacred volume, as a token of affection for Our Lord's teaching, and says: "May our sins be blotted out by the words of the Gospel." But these words are omitted, as well as the signing and kissing of the Missal, in Masses of the Dead, though the Server always answers: *Laus tibi, Christe*, "praise be to thee, O Christ."

It cannot have failed to strike many that, in reading the Gospel, the priest does not stand square to the Altar, as he did in reading the Epistle, but turns somewhat to his left, at an angle to the Altar. Why is this? And what does this position imply? It may be that the Church, with her conservative genius, desires to preserve a vestige of the ancient practice of reading the Gospel to the people from the pulpit; hence, the priest still turns somewhat towards the congregation.

Moreover, if the Altar is, as it should be, towards the east, then the priest, in turning to his left, turns also towards the north. As it has just been stated, the Epistle, on the south side, is like a preparation for the Gospel, and symbolizes the

preaching of the Word to the Jews. They rejected Our Lord and His doctrines, then was the Gospel preached to the Gentile world, typified, in the words of Saint Gregory, by the north: "The dark, cold north is a figure of the heathen world, for idolatry has hardened their hearts, just as the cold has frozen the northern lands." The following words of Jeremias 3:12, though spoken primarily of the Jews in captivity at Babylon, further north than Judea, may also have reference to the establishment of the Church and to the conversion of the Gentiles: "Go, and proclaim these words towards the north." Hence the position that the priest takes, when reading the Gospel, either at this point or at the end of Mass.

## **The Sermon**

The very ancient practice of the Bishop or Priest turning to explain to the people the Epistle and Gospel just read has fixed this stage of the Liturgy as the most appropriate for the Sermon or Instruction. From the very earliest times, it was recognized as an essential duty of the Clergy to instruct the Faithful in the truths of religion, and as to the fulfillment of their duties. Though this is in no sense part of the Liturgy, yet it usually takes place in connection with it, and is of such paramount importance, that the reader will perhaps be indulgent enough to allow a short digression, as this opportunity offers, on the subject of hearing instruction.

It is a thousand pities that so many nowadays are reluctant to hear sermons, and can ill brook attendance at any form of instruction; too often they go designedly to an early Mass, when such can seldom be given, and never appear again in Church till the following Sunday comes round. Similarly, it is becoming more and more the custom to overlook and neglect Evening Service and Instruction, as though they were beneath notice; whereas, our minds could here again be enlightened with the truth, and our hearts sanctified by

the blessing of our Sacramental Lord raised over our heads. This is why men grow up in lamentable ignorance of even the elementary truths, and of the common laws and practices of the Church; the result is they take no interest in the spiritual welfare of their souls, and so run imminent risk of eternal damnation.

To guard, so far as may be, against so great an evil, the Council of Trent strictly enjoined on the Clergy the duty of instructing their flocks, especially on Sundays; this consequently implies the correlative duty of the Faithful to be present at such instruction. In these days of ours, it is perhaps more than ever necessary, for the spirit of irreligion and indifference is abroad, the Gospel morality is being attacked on all sides, the law of obedience and respect is vanishing. It thus becomes absolutely necessary to be well grounded in the knowledge of our Religion, and of our Christian duties, so that we may be able to withstand the onslaughts of those who write or speak against God and all things good and holy.

Therefore, let all Catholics, as they value their immortal souls, do their best to assist at the Sunday instructions, and to hear them with the soil of their hearts well prepared by prayer and humility, goodwill and attention, and then, like the seed in the Gospel parable, the Word of God will bring forth abundant fruit, which will show itself in their daily lives, and will be their strength both in life and in death.

Be it also the anxious care of parents, for similar reasons, to see that their children attend the instructions meant for them, in the form of Catechism, on Sunday afternoon or evening. Train them to this simple and efficacious practice while they are young, and we may reasonably hope that in after years they will adhere to their religion, in spite of all

difficulties, to the common joy of their parents and pastors, no less than to their own best interests.

For nearly five hundred years after the institution of the Church, when the Gospel had been read and the instruction upon it had been given, the “Mass of the Catechumens” ended, that is, those who were being prepared for Baptism were dismissed from the assembly of the Faithful, in virtue of the Discipline of the Secret, already referred to, whereby such persons were not yet considered fit to see or learn more of the Sacred Mysteries. – This, then, completes the first division of the Mass.

### **Offertory - From the *Credo* to the *Sanctus***

Now comes the Offertory, one of the three most important parts of the Sacrifice. When the *Credo* is said at Mass, it forms the transition from the first to the second part of the Liturgy. Before the Apostles separated, to begin their missionary work in various portions of the world, they drew up a symbol of faith, containing the chief doctrines they had received from their Divine Master. This was known as the Apostles’ Creed, the standard of belief and teaching, which they were to carry forth to the nations of the earth, and for many generations it was the only formulary of faith in existence. It seems never to have been committed to writing, lest Catechumens or enemies should come to a knowledge of it, but it was handed down by word of mouth only. Saint Cyril and Saint Ambrose both warn the Faithful against writing it out. Some authors say it was used in the Mass into the early part of the fourth century.

About this time, Arius, priest of Alexandria, had been troubling the peace of the Church, by falsely teaching that Our Lord was not truly God, denying, in other words, the divinity of the world’s Redeemer. The Council of Nicea was

held in a.d. 325, and the three hundred and eighteen bishops there assembled condemned the impiety of Arius, giving forth the clear teaching of the Church on the divinity of Our Lord, as truly the Son of God, and enlarging upon some of the articles of the Apostles' Creed, which especially refer to the Son; thus it is we have the Nicene Creed, which is merely a development of that of the Apostles.

Before the end of the same fourth century, errors arose also as to the divinity of the Holy Ghost, and these were condemned by the Council of Constantinople, in a.d. 381, when the Fathers enlarged and developed the Creed of Nicea, by adding the Church's teaching as to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity; it is this *Credo* that we now recite in the Mass. It is usually styled the Nicene Creed, yet really it is the Creed of the Council of Constantinople.

It is said or sung after the Gospel, or after the Sermon, should there have been one. The congregation stand during its recital, as a mark of respect, and also as a bold profession of faith in the doctrines contained in it. At the words, however, which tell of the loving mystery of the Incarnation, the priest genuflects, bending his right knee to the ground, and the Faithful do the same, as an act of veneration to the Son of God made man: *Et homo factus est*.

When is the Creed said in the Mass? Not in every Mass, but only on stated occasions, clearly defined and laid down by the rubrics, as follows:

1. On all Sundays and Holidays of obligation.
2. On the various feasts of Our Lord and His Holy Mother.
3. On feasts of the Apostles, who by their arduous labours propagated it over the earth.

4. Usually on feasts of the Doctors of the Church, who in their writings have explained and developed the doctrines it contains.

5. On the feast of the Patron Saint of the Church or Diocese where Mass is said, and on feasts of the Angels.

6. Whenever the Creed is said on any feast day having an octave, it is said also each day throughout the octave, when the Mass of the feast is repeated.

Except on the occasions here enumerated, it is omitted. But it is interesting to remark that Saint Mary Magdalen is the only female Saint, apart Our Blessed Lady, that has the *Credo* peculiar to the Mass of her feast, 22nd July. This privilege she enjoys, because, in the language of the Church, she is styled the “Apostle of the Apostles,” for, as Holy Scripture avers, it was to her that Our Lord first appeared on His rising from the tomb, and commanded her to go and tell His disciples (John 20:17).

After greeting the people once again, the priest, standing in front of the Crucifix, now reads from the Missal what is known as the *Offertory*. The origin of this anthem and of its name goes back to the days, when the Faithful themselves used to bring up to the Altar the bread and wine needed for the Sacrifice, this antiphon being said or sung as they were doing so. Here we have the principle and origin of the custom of the Faithful making an offering to the priest, when they desire Mass to be said for their intention; a money offering is now made, towards their support, instead of gifts in the form of bread, wine, or fruit, etc. But a vestige of the old practice is still seen in the Mass of Ordination or Consecration, when wax candles, loaves of bread, and wine are, at this point of the ceremony, solemnly offered to the presiding Pontiff.



A word of explanation may be given here on an expression found in the Offertory of the *Requiem* Mass, which may puzzle pious souls who read it. Our Lord therein is begged to deliver the souls of the Faithful departed from the pains of hell and to deliver them from the mouth of the lion! Yet, out of hell there is no redemption, and once souls are in the power of the Devil, never can they be freed from it. The simple answer to the difficulty is that in early ages, Mass could be said at any time of the day for a person who was considered to be at the point of death. The priest who received such intimation could, whether fasting or not, straightway offer the Holy Sacrifice for such person. The merit of the Mass could thus ascend to Heaven, and God was therein implored to have mercy and not allow such soul to fall into hell. The learned Pope Benedict XIV. is one of those who hold to this explanation. The ancient custom of thus saying Mass at any moment for a soul about to leave the earth is no longer in existence; but the Church has not deemed it necessary to change the words of this Offertory, once again displaying her conservative instinct, by retaining words that refer to an extinct practice, which is here recalled by a seemingly inappropriate expression, so easily explained by a knowledge of its origin. Similarly, during Advent, we still pray that the clouds may “rain down the Just One,” though the expected Messiah has long ago come and gone from the earth.

After reading the Offertory, the priest uncovers the chalice, and taking the paten in his hands, with the bread upon it, he makes the oblation thereof to God, begging Him to accept it as a victim for his own sins and offences, and those of all present, as well as for the benefit of Christians generally, whether living or dead. At the conclusion, he makes a cross with the paten over the corporal, and then, as it were, lays the victim upon it. The corporal aptly recalls the linen of the Crib and the shroud of the Tomb.

Then taking the chalice, he advances to the Epistle corner, where he receives the wine cruets, from which he pours a little into the chalice, saying nothing while so doing. Then from the other cruet, he pours in a few drops of water, begging of God that we may be united by grace to Our Lord's divinity, who deigned to become partaker of our humanity. Something has already been said in a previous chapter on this mingling of water with the wine, so that further comment here is unnecessary.

Returning to the middle of the Altar, the priest makes now the oblation of the chalice, praying that it may ascend with the odour of sweetness to Heaven, for the salvation of mankind. Lowering then the chalice, as he did the paten, he places it on the corporal, and covers it with the palla, which prevents flies or dust falling into it.

After bowing down a short time in prayer, the priest proceeds once more to the Epistle corner, where he washes the tips of the thumb and first finger of each hand; these alone are allowed to touch the Blessed Sacrament, and were, on the day of his ordination, solemnly consecrated and anointed for that purpose. While the water is being poured, he recites a few verses from the twenty-fifth Psalm and says the *Lavabo*: "I will wash my hands among the innocent." Apart from the literal meaning of these words and the need of washing his fingers, to cleanse them from all soil and dust, especially after using the thurible at High Mass, there is also a figurative meaning in this little ceremony, namely, that his soul must be free from sin and defects, for the worthy celebration of Holy Mass.

Then, shortly, comes the *Orate, fratres*. The celebrant turns round to the congregation and addresses these words to them, asking them to pray that their common sacrifice may be acceptable in the eyes of God Almighty. Only these two

words does he utter aloud, saying the rest to himself, perhaps that the choir might not be disturbed, who were still singing the Offertory at High Mass, and the custom has since been retained at every Mass. Or it may be that the earnestness and piety of some great Pontiff, in making the request, may have led him to utter these first words as a sigh and exclamation from the heart, an example that was followed by others, till it became general and universal. Of this we shall meet similar instances later on.

This is the last time the priest turns towards the people, till the Sacrifice is completed and the Communion received. He is now beginning the more solemn portion of the Mass, and entering, as it were, the Holy of Holies, like the High Priest of the Old Covenant. Knowing his own frailties and unworthiness, he appeals to his people to pray for him who is their fellow-being, their priest and mediator. By the lips of their representative, the Server at the Altar, they do his bidding, and pray: "May the Lord receive this Sacrifice from thy hands, for the praise and honour of His own name, for our benefit, and for that of the whole Church." When priest and people are thus united in prayer for each other, they may well expect Our Lord to fulfill His promise, and be in the midst of them, to grant their petitions.

After the Server's reply to the greeting addressed to the people, the priest recites the *Secret*. This is a prayer so named because said in a low voice, not heard by those around, and said thus for the same reason again, namely, that the choir, formerly situated close to the Altar, were still singing the Offertory, or some other anthem. As the Collect usually asks some grace or blessing from God, so the Secret generally begs Him to accept the gifts laid upon the Altar, and to reform our hearts that they may be acceptable in His sight.

There may be more than one Secret, but the number always corresponds with that of the Collects, read at the beginning of Mass; at the end of the last one, the priest raises his voice and, after three versicles and their answers, he begins –

The *Preface*, most probably of Apostolic origin, a sort of introduction to the Canon, not an essential, but very impressive part of the Mass. It is an invitation to raise our hearts to God and tender Him our thanks, through His Divine Son, and in unison with the heavenly choirs mentioned by name, for His many favours, and for the great work He is about to accomplish, by the ministry of His priest, at the Consecration. Thus did Our Lord act, before instituting the Blessed Sacrament, as we read in the Gospels.

There are in the Roman Missal eleven different prefaces, used on various occasions, and serving to bring under our notice the characteristics of the feast, or the mystery for which we should thank and adore God. These prefaces are for the Nativity, the Epiphany, for Lent, Passiontide, Easter, and the Ascension for Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, for feasts of the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles; lastly, what is called the Common Preface, for ordinary use when no other is prescribed, and which is probably the oldest of them all.

At High Mass, the Preface is sung, and the Church here employs a chant most simple, yet most exquisitely thrilling and soul inspiring; apart from its venerable antiquity, dating back perhaps to the very days of the Temple, this plain chant has ever been regarded by musical experts with the greatest enthusiasm and admiration, often moving people to tears as they listened to it. Whichever preface be said or sung at Mass, it always concludes with –

The *Sanctus*. Here the bell is rung to recall the wandering thoughts of the people, and to remind them that the Canon,

the solemn part of the Mass, is commencing. This short hymn is said in a lower tone of voice than the preface, leading by a gentle transition to the Canon, the whole of which is inaudible to the congregation. The first words recall the glorious vision of Isaias 6:3, wherein he heard the Seraphim crying out before the throne of God: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts; all the earth is full of His glory." While the second part consists of the words of King David, which the Jews sang to Our Lord, as He solemnly entered Jerusalem: *Benedictus qui venit*, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 21:9). These words are again a most appropriate welcome given to Our Lord, as He comes down upon the Altar, at the Consecration. *Hosanna in excelsis* is a shout of joy, concluding both parts of the *Sanctus*.

### **The Canon - From the *Sanctus* to the *Pater***

This, the most sacred portion of the whole Sacrifice, is called the "Canon of the Mass," because, derived from a Greek word meaning a rule, it is the fixed rule to be strictly followed by the priest, there being only five Feasts during the ecclesiastical year, on which a slight variation in the words of one prayer is at all tolerated; apart from these, there is never any change. The Church has a most jealous care of this part of her Liturgy, and severely forbids any innovation here, on account of its venerable antiquity, which all writers seem agreed to admit.

As an instance of this, it may be stated that in the year 1815, at a time when devotion to Saint Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, was spreading and gaining favour throughout the Church, an application was made, for this very reason, that his name might be added to those already found in the Canon. The reply, however, was in the negative, and his name has never been introduced; no addition has

ever been made since the days of Pope Gregory the Great, in the sixth century.

The whole of the Canon, portions of which are probably the work of the Apostles themselves, is said in an inaudible voice, so as to promote recollection and devotion, in both priest and people, at this most solemn time. Moreover, it is desirable to prevent such sacred words becoming too familiar, as they might do, if they were recited aloud on every occasion, like other portions of the Mass. Silence, therefore, prevails, and, like a mysterious veil, envelops the Divine Mysteries, recalling Our Lord's sublime silence, at the time of His Passion, and also serving to remind us of the ancient Discipline of the Secret.

During the Canon, the Celebrant frequently makes the sign of the Cross over the Elements on the Altar, both before and even after the Consecration! In the former case, it is the usual manner of imparting a benediction or blessing to creatures. But, in the second case, the idea of blessing the true Body and Blood of Our Lord, present on the Altar, is altogether repugnant. Then, the idea is to recall to our minds the Sacrifice of the Cross and its continuance in the Mass; or, it is a profession of faith that, in the Mass, Christ crucified is present as priest and victim.

In the first prayer of the Canon, the *Te igitur*, we beg that God may vouchsafe to accept the gifts that are being offered to Him, and to grant peace to His Church; we likewise pray for the Pope, the Vicar of Christ and Head of the Church, for the Bishop of the diocese where Mass is being said, and finally for all members of the Church on earth.

The Memento of the Living is the second prayer of the Canon. Here the priest pauses a little while, to make a spiritual remembrance of those for whom he particularly

wishes to pray, and especially of the person or object for which he is offering the Sacrifice.

A word should be said here on the ancient use of the Diptychs, often referred to in early Church history. The diptychs were folding tablets, on the inner sides of which were inscribed names of persons living and dead. Among the former were included the Supreme Pontiff, the Bishop, and the ruling Sovereign, those also for whose special benefit the Holy Sacrifice was being offered, who supplied the wants of the Altar, or contributed to the support of its ministers. In another column were inserted the names of deceased Faithful; to this reference will be made later.

These diptychs used to be read up to the assembled congregation, at High Mass by the Deacon, at Low Mass by the celebrant himself. This practice remained in vogue for many long centuries, till vanity led so many to have their names inscribed and announced, that in the eleventh century the Church thought well to discontinue what was proving to be a source of sin and disedification; hence, the custom no longer exists, except in some churches of the East.

But a further instance of the Church's conservative spirit is seen in the fact that the letters N.N. are still to be retained in the Missal at this point, though the practice of reading up the names has long ceased to exist.

Next comes the *Communicantes*, wherein we beg of God to grant us His help and protection, through the merits and intercession of His Saints. The Mother of God and the twelve Apostles are first mentioned, and to their names are added those of twelve Martyrs, well known and honoured in and about Rome, who adorned the early days of the Church by shedding their blood in defense of her doctrines. Those who

had died for the Faith, by being thus named in the Canon, were said to be canonised, that is, found worthy of being named at this point of the Mass; thus was canonisation originally effected. A vestige of this is still retained at the present day; for, when the Pope has solemnly declared any servant of God to be worthy of the honours of the Altar, he invokes him, in the Mass said on the occasion, after the other Saints named in the Canon.

While reciting the next prayer, *Hanc igitur*, the priest spreads his hands over the bread and wine, a ceremony borrowed from the Old Law, as we read in Exodus 29:10,15,19, where God commanded that Aaron should place his hands on the head of the victims he was about to offer in sacrifice. This action denotes that the priest charges the victim with his own sins and with those of the people whom he represents, the victim which is to mystically suffer and die instead of the sinner. What was symbolism in the olden day is reality now in the Christian Mass, wherein the Lamb of God, who took upon Himself the sins of the world, daily renews the sacrifice of Calvary for their expiation. As this prayer and its accompanying action so closely precede the Consecration, the Server here rings the bell, to remind the people of the near approach of the solemn moment.

During the next few words, five times does the priest again make the sign of the Cross over the oblations, recalling the five Wounds of Victim of Calvary, and reminding us it is the sacrifice of the Cross that is here being renewed.

And now we have reached the sacred moment of the Consecration, the essential act of the Sacrifice, when the Angels of Heaven are preparing to come down upon earth to adore their sacramental Lord. The words of this part of the Liturgy are almost the same as those of the Gospel, relating the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. Suiting the action



to the words, the priest, in imitation of Our Lord, takes the bread in his hands, and raising his eyes heavenwards, as tradition says Our Lord did, he blesses it, and pronounces the mystical words: "This is my body," and behold! transubstantiation is thereupon effected – the bread has become the true Body of Christ!

How stupendous a change! How sublime a miracle! How awful an act! Yet how marvellously simple is it all! Man utters a few words, and God's love and power fulfill the wondrous change. It is a repetition of the act of creation: "Be light made: and light was made" (Genesis 1:3). It is a commemoration also of another sublime mystery, expressed in the simplest terms: "The Word was made flesh" (John 1:14).

At once the priest bends his knee to adore his Creator whom, all unworthy though he be, he now holds in his hands! The bell here rings gently, to remind the Faithful of what has taken place at the Altar, and invite their adoring worship. This tinkling of the bell should bring ease to our souls: there is joy in the very ringing of it, for does it not signify the new birth of the God-made-man, ever living to make intercession for us?

"Sound, sound His praises higher still,  
And come, ye angels, to our aid:  
Tis God! Tis God! the very God  
Whose power both man and angels made!"

This adoration of the Holy Eucharist is attested by all antiquity, even the earliest Fathers of the Church instructing their flocks to renew their faith in the Real Presence, and adore Him whom their faith acknowledges to have descended from Heaven to earth, surrounded by the invisible angels of His Court.

The priest rising immediately, elevates the Sacred Host for the Faithful to look upon and adore, symbolizing the lifting up of Christ on the Cross. Reverence and devotion have led them to bow down during the whole time of the Consecration and Elevation, and the deep-rooted custom has become universal. Yet the very object of the priest's thus raising the Sacred Host is that the Faithful may rest their eyes on It and see their Lord in His sacramental form! To urge them to revert to the original idea, the late Pontiff Leo XIII granted an indulgence to all such as should reverently look upon their uplifted Lord at this moment. Hence, such as assist at the Holy Sacrifice should raise their eyes, for a moment at least, and so justify the Elevation, which otherwise would have no meaning, while, at the same time, they will gain with ease the indulgence that is offered for the mere act of thus looking devoutly on the Sacred Host, as it is raised up before them!

The reader must here be reminded that this elevation of the consecrated elements did not take place till the eleventh century. In 1047 Berengarius, who has already been referred to, began to broach errors on the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. These were promptly repudiated and condemned by the Church, and this ceremony - the Elevation - was unanimously adopted as a protest against the impieties and new doctrines of this heretic, and as a practical profession of faith in Our Lord's presence on the Altar, after the words of consecration have been uttered.

Devout Catholics must, during this solemn time, manifest both by outward demeanour and inward faith, the reverence they cherish towards the Eucharistic mysteries; silent adoration is then their duty. Silence during these moments produces a most impressive effect, and is by all means to be encouraged.

Then follows the second Consecration, that of the wine in the chalice, with similar adoration and elevation. Thus two elements, bread and wine, are necessary for the Eucharistic Sacrifice, though one suffices for the Eucharistic Sacrament. This separate consecration of the bread and wine is, in a mystical sense, the painless immolation of the Divine Lamb, typifying that separation of His Blood from His Body, which took place on Calvary with the most painful reality.

It may be repeated here that, should the Celebrant die suddenly after either consecration, or be taken so seriously ill as to be unable to proceed further with the Mass, another priest must, if possible, be found to continue and complete it, even though (perhaps) he be not fasting; for, the Natural Law, requiring the completion of the Sacrifice, prevails over the law of fasting, which is merely of Ecclesiastical origin.

The first prayer after the Consecration is *Unde et memores*. The Mass of itself cannot but be pleasing in the sight of God, for Christ, the Victim, is His Own beloved Son, of infinite merit before him. Yet the priest and the Faithful also share in offering the Sacrifice, and this privilege should overpower them as they reflect upon their sins and unworthiness. Hence, as guilty beings, they here beg of God to accept *their* Sacrifice, as of old He was pleased to receive the offerings of Abel, Abraham, and Melchisedech. The sacrifices of the first two were, more than others, typical of the bloody Sacrifice of the Cross, while that of Melchisedech was a figure of the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass. The Celebrant asks also that God's angel may carry the offering to the Altar on High, in sight of the Divine Majesty and His heavenly Court – a reference to the golden altar of the Apocalypse 8:3.

The sign of the Cross that the priest now makes over the consecrated elements is no longer here a blessing given, but a reminder that the Victim who died on the Cross now lies

before us on the Altar. The Church avails herself of every occasion to impress on the minds of priest and people alike this great truth – that the Sacrifice of the Altar is the selfsame as that of the Cross. Hence, the frequent use of the Cross over the oblations, even after the Consecration.

The next point to notice is the *Memento* of the dead. The Church, from the days of the Apostles, has ever taught and practised prayer for her deceased children. It has ever been her belief that there is a Purgatory, or place of suffering after death, where those who die in the state of grace, but as yet not pure enough to enter Heaven, are detained for awhile, till their souls are sufficiently cleansed to appear in the presence of God. It was hardly likely, therefore, that the Church would pray for her living members, in this august Sacrifice, and omit to pray for those who are no longer with her on earth, but have entered the home of their eternity. Hence, we have at this point the “remembrance” of the dead, that is, the names of departed Faithful, inscribed on the Diptychs, were read up, and prayers were asked that they might be granted “a place of refreshment, light, and peace,” that their sufferings might be mitigated, or even ended by their release from Purgatory and their entrance into Heaven. We are thus requested to pray, as Saint Augustine remarks, “that such religious duty, whenever it becomes neglected by parents, children, relations, or friends, may be supplied by our pious and common mother, the Church.”

Should a departed soul for whom Mass is offered be unable to benefit by it, either because eternally lost, or because already in Heaven, theologians commonly teach that such sacrifice is by no means lost, but the fruit of it becomes part of the general treasury of the Church, whence indulgences may be granted by the dispensers of God’s mercy.

And next, the priest strikes his breast, like the Publican in the Temple, and utters aloud the words *Nobis quoque peccatoribus*, beginning the last prayer of the Canon. After interceding for the souls of the Faithful departed, he prays now for sinners upon earth, whose future is still uncertain and exposed to many dangers. By way of showing the earnestness of his petition, or as a sigh from the heart, he pronounces these first three words aloud, (the only words heard during the Canon,) all the rest being recited in a subdued voice throughout. Mention is made of Martyrs and Saints belonging to different orders and states in the Church, with whom we ask God to grant us, in spite of our sins, some part and fellowship.

At the end of this prayer, the priest holds the Sacred Host over the chalice and raises them a little from the Altar, and then replaces them. This was formerly *the* Elevation of the Mass, and, till the eleventh century, the only one. But it has been already explained how, during that century, the principal Elevation came to be made at the time of the Consecration, as a protest against the errors of Berengarius. With the second (and now, minor elevation), the priest concludes the prayer, raising his voice, and saying *Per omnia saecula saeculorum*, "World without end: amen." This ends the Canon of the Mass, and leads us into the last division.

## **Conclusion - From the *Pater* to the End of Mass**

The fourth part, called the Communion, comprises the final ceremonies of Holy Mass and completes the Sacrifice. The Holy Eucharist, as we have seen, is not only a sacrifice, but also food for our souls. Hence, if the Divine Lamb has been mystically immolated in our behalf at the Consecration, the Mass would be incomplete, unless that Divine Food were consumed, at least by the officiating minister, through his

own sacramental communion, from which this last part of the Liturgy takes its name. "The Communion of the celebrant is essential to the Mass in this sense, that, like the offertory, it appears to be of Divine institution, and cannot be dispensed with, even by the Church herself. The Mass was instituted, not only to provide the redeemed people of God with a Sacrifice, but also to furnish them with the greatest of all Sacraments. The priest when he communicates, receives as a Sacrament, that Divine Victim whom he has first offered up as a Sacrifice. The sacrificial meal is the Sacrament."

This communion of the priest is introduced by a series of beautiful prayers. The first is the *Pater Noster*, the family prayer, as it were, of the Church, forming the transition to this part of the Mass, as the Preface served to introduce the Canon. This is the prayer Our Lord Himself taught to the Apostles, and through them to the world, in answer to their request: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). "Thus shall you pray," replied Our Saviour, and He gave them the Lord's Prayer, as it is termed, the "Our Father." This most excellent of all prayers contains a summary of perfection and sanctity. It consists of seven petitions or requests, the first three of which refer to the glory of God, in and through us, while the remaining four concern our own wants, spiritual and temporal. In this respect it recalls the Seven Words spoken by Our Lord on the Cross, and thus becomes a further memorial of the Sacrifice of the Altar being the same as that of Calvary. It is thought to have been introduced into the Mass by the Apostles, at the command, says Saint Jerome, of Our Lord Himself! Its present position was assigned to it by Saint Gregory the Great, in the sixth century.

The *Pater* is said at Low Mass, and sung at High Mass, in each case aloud, whole and entire, for the Catechumens

were not present at this portion of the service, therefore the ancient Discipline of the Secret did not hold.

The concluding petition (deliverance from evil) is further developed in the prayer which follows, namely, the *Libera nos*, wherein we ask to be freed from all evils, past, present, and future, and beg the intercession of the Saints that our days may be spent in peace and free from all disturbance of mind and body. Over and over again do the prayers of the Church beg this favour of God, for peace is one of the greatest blessings of Heaven, essential for our happiness and welfare here below, and most conducive to the attaining of eternal peace hereafter. It is the blessing Our Lord wished His Apostles on more than one occasion (John 14:27; 20:19,26).

Towards the end of this prayer, the priest divides the Sacred Host into two equal parts, an important act and a liturgical ceremony full of meaning. In this, he acts as the Divine Master had done at the Last Supper, when He broke bread and divided it amongst the Disciples (Matthew 26:26). In the early days of the Church, the breaking of bread was synonymous with consecrating the Blessed Eucharist (Acts 20:7). Such fraction of the Host typifies Our Lord's violent death on the Cross, and represents the Blessed Eucharist as the food of our souls, broken and divided among those who desire to receive it.

From the half remaining in his left hand, the priest, after laying down the other on the paten, again breaks off a small portion, which he places in the Chalice, praying that the commingling of Christ's Body and Blood may be to all who receive it effectual to eternal life. As the separate Consecration denoted the mystical death of Christ, so this union of the two Species in the Chalice represents the return to life of the Lamb that was slain on Calvary.

It may be well to briefly recall here what was said on a previous occasion, that when the sacred Species are thus broken and divided, Our Lord Himself is in no way affected by such act; He is now beyond all pain and suffering, and remains whole and entire under every portion and particle; what is broken is but the appearance of bread.

“There is no breakage, no dividing,  
Whole He comes to everyone.”

Hitherto the Celebrant has directed his prayers to the eternal Father, but now he turns to God the Son, lying before him on the Altar, and soon to be sacramentally received by him; for this he now prepares himself, and says the *Agnus Dei*. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him, he said: “Behold the Lamb of God: behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). These words the Church here uses three times over, and the priest twice begs the Lamb to grant us mercy, and the third time asks the blessing of peace’, a most appropriate request, as he is on the point of receiving the very Author of peace. At each petition, he strikes his breast, recognizing himself as unworthy of such a favour. In Masses for the Dead, as we are not praying for ourselves, we do not strike our breasts; the priest contents himself with words of address to the Divine Lamb, and instead of mercy and peace, implores rest, eternal rest for the Faithful departed, in their restless yearning for God.

The three prayers that follow are by way of immediate preparation for the priest’s Communion. The first one (which is omitted in a *Requiem* Mass) begs once more the blessing of peace, and prays for the unity of faith and love in the Church. After which, at High Mass, the priest kisses the Altar and then gives the kiss of peace to the deacon, and by him to the rest of clergy present. The Apostles instructed the Faithful to salute one another with a holy kiss (I Corinthians



16:20; II Corinthians 13:12; I Peter 5:14). This apostolic advice was introduced into the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, even laymen saluting thus their fellow-laymen. Hence, the primitive custom, still observed in some places, of men and women occupying separate sides of the church.

In the second prayer, the priest begs the grace of perseverance, and in the third implores that his reception of the Holy Eucharist may not turn to his judgment and condemnation, but prove to be a safeguard and blessing to both soul and body.

Then, holding the Blessed Sacrament in his left hand, he with the other strikes his breast thrice, and says each time the words: *Domine, non sum dignus*. These are the first words of the exclamation which the centurion uttered, when Our Lord proposed to go to his house and heal his servant, lying sick of the palsy and grievously tormented (Matthew 8:8). The Church has adopted them, with the change of one word, as most appropriate to the present moment. The priest, realising his utter unworthiness to receive into his heart the great God of Heaven, as his guest, repeats this prayer thrice within himself, saying only the first words aloud, giving vent, as it were, to the depth of his feeling, in the form of a sigh from the heart, just as he did at the *Nobis quoque peccatoribus*, and as a public confession of his unworthiness before Heaven and earth. Each time the ejaculation is made, the Server rings the bell again, and this is a signal for the Faithful to go up to the Altar rails, if they desire to receive Holy Communion.

Taking reverently both parts of the Sacred Host in his right hand, the celebrant makes with them the sign of the Cross on himself, and devoutly receives them; then, after a few moments' silent recollection, he gathers up most carefully on to the paten such small particles of the consecrated Host

as may be lying on the corporal, just as the Apostles gathered up the fragments, after the miraculous feeding of the multitudes (Matthew 14:20; 15:37; John 6:13). These particles he puts into the chalice, and devoutly receives with the Precious Blood. As far back as the middle of the fourth century, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem wrote: "Let not one single crumb of that which is more precious than gold escape you." Such solicitude and scruple would never have been displayed for particles of mere common bread. Evidently, then, the sainted writer fully believed each particle of the Blessed Sacrament to be the real body of Christ.

Only the priest who celebrates receives under both forms, as Our Lord directed at the Last Supper: "Take ye and eat . . . Drink ye all of this" (Matthew 26:26,27). But the Apostles alone were then present, and He then ordained them sacrificing priests. All others of whatever rank, who receive without saying Mass, do so under one form only, as has been fully explained before.

Hence, the priest, when his own Communion is over, takes the ciborium containing the Blessed Sacrament under the form of bread only, and distributes It to those who have approached to receive it, and says to each one: "May the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul to life everlasting"; to these words the communicant formerly answered "Amen." Though this is not done nowadays, each one should endeavour to feel in his heart what that word implies, namely, a desire that his holy Communion may indeed bring him to life eternal.

After returning to the Altar, and replacing the ciborium in the Tabernacle, the priest holds out the Chalice to the Server, who pours a little wine into it. A second time is this done and some water is added, both being poured over the fingers that have touched the Blessed Sacrament, so that all

particles that have adhered to them may be removed; he again receives the Chalice, and then dries both his fingers and it with the mandatory. These pourings of wine and water are called the « ablutions,” or washings; they secure the priest receiving any particles of the sacred species adhering to the Chalice or his fingers. When all this is done, he rearranges and adjusts the Chalice veil, and proceeds to the Epistle side of the Altar whither the Missal has meanwhile been carried, and therefrom he reads aloud

The *Communion*; this is a short anthem, which varies with the feast, and is usually a verse or two taken from a psalm, which for many centuries was said in full. It bears its present name, because formerly it was chanted or sung during the time that Holy Communion was being distributed to the Faithful. It is like a spiritual bouquet, we should carry away with us, of the spirit of the feast of which Mass has been said. Once more turning to the people, the priest addresses them, at the middle of the Altar, with the usual greeting, *Dominus vobiscum*, and returns to the Missal to read -

The *Post-Communion*: this prayer always contains some reference to the great Sacrament he has just received, and some expression of gratitude and thanks for the ineffable favour thus bestowed on him.

Whatever be the number of Collects said at the early part of the Mass, there is always the same number of Secrets said, and the same number of Post-Communions. Comparing together these three sets of prayers, we may say, broadly speaking, that the Collect asks of God some grace or favour, through the intercession of the Saint whose feast is being observed; the Secret generally prays God to look with favour on the offerings that lie on the Altar and be pleased to accept them to the glory of His Name; while the Post-

Communion contains an act of thanksgiving for the graces received through the Holy Eucharist.

Proceeding now to the middle of the Altar, which he kisses, the priest again greets his people, adding the words *Ite, missa est*, "Go, you are dismissed." This was once the completion of the Mass of the Faithful, as the Mass of Catechumens ended with their dismissal after the Gospel, or the Sermon. On days, however, when the *Gloria* is not recited, instead of the *Ite, Benedicamus Domino* is said, "Let us bless the Lord." The omission of the *Gloria* usually denotes a penitential time, such as Lent, Advent, etc., and when the actual Mass was ended, instead of dismissing the people, the priest invited them to remain for the canonical hours that followed, saying, "Let us continue to bless the Lord." Although this is no longer done, the Church once again shows her conservative spirit, and retains the expression used anciently when such services were the custom, and in doing this reminds us of an ancient practice. Then again, in Masses of the Dead, neither of these greetings is used, but their place is taken by *Requiescant in pace*, a petition that the souls of the deceased may rest in peace.

Up to the tenth or eleventh century, the Mass ended with these formulas. What follows them at the present day was added gradually only, and finally made obligatory by Saint Pius V. in 1570.

The priest now bows profoundly before the Crucifix, begging the most Holy Trinity to accept the sacrifice he has offered, making it a propitiation for himself and all those for whom he has offered it. Then, kissing the Altar, he turns to the people and blesses them with the sign of the Cross, which he makes over them. This blessing at Mass is reckoned as one of the Sacramentals, or rites which have some outward

resemblance to the Sacraments, but which are not of divine institution. They excite increased love of God in the heart and also hatred for sin, and, because of these movements, remit venial sin. In the Old Law, we read how the High Priest stretched forth his hands and blessed the people (Leviticus 9:22), while Our Saviour blessed His Apostles, before ascending to Heaven (Luke 24:50). In the beginning, Bishops alone gave this blessing, forming a triple sign of the Cross in so doing; later on priests were allowed to give it, with a single Cross only: in a *Requiem Mass*, the blessing is always omitted.

The priest next goes to the Gospel side of the Altar, and there reads the last Gospel, with the same ceremonial that accompanied the reading of the first one, as already described.

Usually, it is the beginning of the Gospel according to Saint John that is here read, telling us of Our Lord's eternal birth in the bosom of His Father, and ending with the august formula of His Incarnation and birth in time. We genuflect at the words *Verbum caro factum est*, "The Word was made flesh," an act of adoration towards the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who was pleased to become man for our redemption. This Gospel used at first to be recited out of private devotion, as an act of thanksgiving, by the priest who had just said Mass. It became of precept under Pope Saint Pius V in the sixteenth century.

On many days, however, throughout the year, another Gospel is read from the Missal, which is again removed to the other side. Certain days, such as the ferias of Lent, Ember days, and Vigils, have a complete Mass of their own; if this be superseded by the Mass of a feast that takes precedence, a commemoration is made, as we have seen, in the Collect, etc., and then the Gospel of the omitted Mass is

read at the end, instead of that of Saint John. But should a *Requiem* Mass be said on any of those days, no commemoration of them is made, nor is any other Gospel ever read but that of Saint John. At the end, the people answer by the Server *Deo gratias*, "Thanks be to God," for the great mystery of the Incarnation, source of all our blessings, and for the Holy Mass, at which they have been privileged to assist.

And now, the priest, taking the Chalice in his hands, descends the Altar steps, genuflects, if necessary, and returns to the Vestry where he unvests, and proceeds to make his thanksgiving. What the priest here does, those who have assisted at Mass, especially if they have been to Communion, should also do, before they leave, namely, make acts of adoration and love, along with good resolutions, which would be equivalent to a worthy act of thanksgiving.

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In concluding this long chapter, we may add that there is no sacrifice or service so pleasing and so acceptable to God as the offering of Holy Mass. There is nothing that so effectually disarms the Divine anger against sin, or strikes a more crushing blow at the powers of Hell. This the Devils know full well and hold It in dread; hence the hatred they bear to It; hence their efforts to discredit It, not only in the enemies of all religion, but even in the hearts of the Faithful, whom they ply with distractions, and fill with tepidity and indifference to It. No other prayer is so effectual in bringing relief to the suffering souls in Purgatory; none obtains so many graces for men upon earth, or gives greater joy to the Blessed in Heaven. Thus the Universal Church of God, Militant, Suffering, and Triumphant, benefits very effectively by every Mass that is offered. The great Judgment day will verify all this!

Be it, therefore, our endeavour to cultivate lively faith and deep devotion towards this Divine work, to be present at Mass, as our circumstances may allow, and thus show our appreciation of the mercy and goodness of God who has established It in our midst. The more we know and understand the Divine Mysteries, the greater should our fervour be, when present at them. It is hoped that these pages of explanation on the prayers and ceremonies of the Liturgy may be an aid to the Faithful to that end. They do not profess to go deeply into matters, but merely offer instruction and suggest interpretations of the various portions of the Mass, which an instructed Catholic should know, and which, it is desired, may prove helpful to his piety and devotion.

## Use of the Latin Language

A subject must now engage our attention for awhile, which is sometimes raised by way of objection against the Church by her opponents, and this is the use of the Latin Language in her Liturgy and Ritual. It is an objection which does not seem to have been felt in ancient times, though in modern days it has been raised, more especially in America.

During the first years of the Church's history, her Liturgy was performed in the vernacular, that is, in the daily language of the peoples to whom the Apostles ministered. But, on the decline of the Roman Empire, in the fifth century, new nations began to spring up in Europe on its ruins, and the Latin tongue, which hitherto had been the universal language of the Empire, ceased to be used; it then became what is termed a dead language, that is, one no longer spoken by any nation. In her wisdom, however, the Church retained but one language, the Latin, for exclusive use in her Liturgy and the administration of the Sacraments. In this she did but imitate the example of the ancient Jewish Synagogue, wherein Hebrew, formerly well understood by the people, continued to be used, though almost quite forgotten by them during the long years of their captivity at Babylon. Had this been fault-worthy, Christ Our Lord would certainly have reproved the practice, as He so freely did the abuses of the Scribes and Pharisees. Yet, He never did find fault with it; He even publicly approved of it, by frequenting the Temple, on occasions when it was observed; and He Himself, when dying on the Cross, prayed in a language which those around Him did not understand. *Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani?* "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). So little did the multitude understand these words, that they thought He was calling for Elias!



There are wise reasons why the Church preserves the use of Latin in her Liturgy; we give the following:

1. According to tradition, Latin was probably the language in which Saint Peter first said Mass in Rome and drew up the Liturgy; and all over the western parts of Christendom, it has invariably been employed at the Altar, from the days of the Apostles themselves.

2. An unchanging doctrine requires an unchanging language. Now, the teaching of the Church can never vary, for truth is one, as God Himself is one, from whom it flows. As, then, the Church and her dogma cannot change, so should the language of the Church ever be one and unchanging.

3. Moreover, the Church is universal and found in all nations. As order is Heaven's first law, so uniformity seems to be the first law of the Church; hence her endeavour to have the Adorable Sacrifice of the Altar offered with the same ceremonies and in the same language throughout the world. No matter, then, in what part of the globe a Catholic may find himself, he can always feel at home in his own Church, where he hears the same language and sees the same ceremonial as at home, no small advantage to his piety, and no small comfort to his loneliness, in his exile or his wanderings a thousand miles from his native land.

4. The vernacular languages change and vary from age to age, and were they to be used in services of the Church, they would need revising and re-adapting every century, perhaps oftener; for, living languages are in a constant state of flux, and words easily come to change their meaning, being subject to variation and corruption. Thus, how many of our own countrymen of the present time could read and understand books written in the days of King Alfred, in the

ninth century? How many, or rather how few, could understand the works of Chaucer, the earliest of our poets, in the fourteenth century? We should need a dictionary or a translation by our side, to be able to follow and appreciate such writings.

An old Bible, published in the fourteenth century, makes Saint Paul declare himself the “villain of Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:1). In those days, “villain” meant a servant, but, at the present time, would hardly be complimentary to anyone even less holy than the great apostle!

“It takes nine tailors to make a man” is a saying, not very flattering to the tailoring fraternity, but it is the result of the corruption of a word. In the days of Catholic Faith, the church bell was tolled, when a member of the congregation had passed away: nine times for a man, six times for a woman, and three times for a child. These tolls of the bell were named “tellers,” as they were intended to tell the world whether it was the death of a man, woman, or child. In course of time, however, the word changed and became “tailors” instead of “tellers”; hence, the uncomplimentary saying.

Monkseaton, the name of a thriving village on the Northumberland coast, is a corruption of Monk’s Stone, a stone which marked the limit of the jurisdiction of the Abbots of the ancient Priory of Tynemouth, three miles away. So again with Buck’s Stone, or Buck’s Town, now Buxton, in Derbyshire.

Numbers of examples of the kind could be given, to show how, in the course of ages, words change their form and even their meaning. If, then, the Church employed the Vernacular in the celebration of Mass, it is easy to see what solicitude and organisation would be needed in every

country to watch over these changing phases of the words she employed, so as to guard against the danger of heterodoxy and misunderstanding, arising out of the instability of living languages. No such anxiety is needed with the use of Latin, which is not now a living language, and is not, therefore, liable to these serious changes.

5. It has never been deemed necessary that the Faithful should hear and understand the words used at the Altar. The whole action of the Mass is one between the priest and God; the priest stands there as mediator for his people, he prays in their name and on their behalf. It is not necessary that they should understand his words; nay, there are parts of the Mass which they are not allowed even to hear, as, for instance, the whole of the Canon, while in Eastern Churches, they are not permitted so much as to see the priest or the Altar! Be it always remembered, Sacrifice is an action rather than a prayer, and the action is directed to God, therefore words, beyond what is essential, are really unnecessary. The Faithful can readily follow and unite in the Sacrifice of the Mass, without hearing the prayers; just as on Calvary, those present could follow the Sacrifice, and unite with the Divine Priest and Victim, had He never broken the silence of the sacrificial act.

6. Those, however, who assist at the Holy Sacrifice cannot be said to be at a disadvantage in all this, for the Clergy are directed to explain to their flocks the nature of the Mass, its ceremonies and prayers and their meaning, and to show them how to accompany the celebrant with prayer and devotions suited to the various portions of the service, and according to their own fervour and feeling. Moreover, the prayer books in common use, especially The English Missal, give a translation of the prayers said by the priest, and thus the Faithful can follow, almost word for word, what he is saying and doing at any given moment. Further, books of

explanation of all that pertains to the Holy Sacrifice abound in every language; to these the laity can refer for information and instruction. They range from learned treatises, of use chiefly to students, down to popular manuals and simple works, such as the one you are now reading. Thus, the Faithful need not be at a loss to know and understand the meaning and import of the Divine Mysteries of the Altar.

7. The people can take part in the Holy Sacrifice, without understanding the words of its language. Those who sing at High Mass seldom understand the pieces they sing; so too is it with nuns reciting the Divine Office in Choir, yet they take their part in giving praise to God, and so acquire merit for themselves. The very statues in a church, which can neither see nor hear nor understand, serve to adorn and beautify God's House, and so give glory to His name. How much more the living souls of men, even though they be unable to actively take part in any way in the offering of the Mass. Imagine, reader, that you are present on Mount Calvary, while Our Lord is offering Himself up as the Victim of Atonement for the world, and realize that when you assist at Mass, you are present at the self-same offering as was made on Calvary; then with feelings of lively faith and thanksgiving, of sorrow for sin and full confidence in God, pour out your prayers at the foot of the Altar, and you will honour Him most effectively, and benefit your own soul also, although you know nothing of the Latin tongue, and understand not what the priest is saying.

If now we reflect calmly on the matter, we must come to the conclusion that the Church acts wisely in adopting the use of the Latin language, as morally necessary for the Liturgy and the Faith, so closely connected therewith. Faith is like a precious jewel, and language is the casket in which it is contained. So jealous is the Church of preserving the jewel

intact, that she will not disturb even the casket in which it is set; hence the unchanging Latin she always employs, as one of the external symbols of her unity. A long tradition has endeared it to millions of men, who love to hear its accents, whether in noble cathedral or humble church, accents they have become accustomed to hear from the days of their very childhood.

It is sometimes said the vernacular would draw, that inquirers would be attracted thereby to our services. Such, however, is hardly the experience of the last three hundred years, from the days when the reformers complained of the use of a language “not understood of the people.” The age of the vernacular seems to have been the age of people ceasing to go to church, of religion decaying, and of nations striving against doctrinal unity. In certain countries of the East, where, by permission of the Holy See, the vernacular is permitted in the Sacred Liturgy, we do not hear of more, but rather of fewer conversions.

Yet, we must always remember there are different services in the Church: the Liturgy, or the Mass, has but one form and one language; this is the Latin for Western Christendom. But there are also extra-liturgical services, for instance, our Sunday evening devotions, such as the Rosary, *Bona Mors*, Stations of the Cross, etc.; most of them are said in the vernacular, and the people join in the public prayers that are used.

# Benediction

As Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament usually concludes the services of Sunday and the greater Festivals, so a few words on the subject may fittingly bring to a close these *Simple Instructions on the Holy Eucharist*. The word Benediction means a blessing; the rite of Benediction is one of the most devotional acts of worship the Church offers to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament; at its close, the priest blesses the people with the Sacred Host, and thus the name Benediction is extended to the whole service. The form it usually takes amongst us here in England is well known to all: the singing of the *O salutaris*, of the Litany of Our Lady, of the *Tantum ergo*, and then the blessing. Owing to its greater length, this Litany naturally occupies the greater portion of the whole service. To many, no doubt, it may seem strange that, with Our Blessed Lord solemnly exposed to view, the larger share of our devotions should be addressed to His holy Mother. Yet, as a matter of history, it is devotion to the Blessed Virgin that has brought about the beautiful rite of Benediction.

But for Our Lady, in the actual dispensation of God, we should never have had Jesus at all; and, historically, but for the gathering of our forefathers in the faith to rehearse the praises of Mary, we might never have had Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. It is true that Exposition of the Sacred Host was known in Catholic Spain as far back as the sixth century, testifying to the belief of the Church in the Real Presence; but Benediction, or the blessing, is of much more recent date.

In the former days of faith, pious members of the Church, both in this country and elsewhere, often bequeathed

legacies for the purpose of securing a service of devotion to the Mother of God in the evening, accompanied with the burning of lights in her honour. One or other of the anthems of the Breviary was to be said or sung, after the public office of the Church was ended, and quite as a distinct service. This was chiefly undertaken by the Laity, who, not being bound to recite the Breviary, yet wished to show their love for the Mother of God by singing her praises, sometimes even providing organ accompaniment for the same. For this purpose, they usually chose the *Salve Regina*, or some other anthem or hymn in her honour, and they even founded guilds or associations, in order to secure regularity and permanence in the devotion.

In the course of time, praises to the Blessed Sacrament came to be added to this evening service of Our Lady, especially on Friday, the day of Our Lord's mercy and love to man. At first it was probably a simple exposing of the Sacred Host, and then later, developing further, about the sixteenth century, the blessing was given with It over the bowed heads and hearts of the faithful.

For this solemn rite, the Altar is usually adorned with candles and flowers, in greater or lesser number, according to the nature of the feast. The lighted candles express our festive joy and add splendour to the worship we wish to pay to our Sacramental Lord, while the flowers denote our love and our endeavour to enlist in His service all that is most beautiful in nature. This display of lights and flowers in the most popular of modern devotions is a great source of attraction both to Catholics and non-catholics, the latter being more willingly present at this evening service than at the morning offering of Holy Mass. The Faithful should deem it a privilege to supply both flowers and candles for the Altar, especially as the greater festivals come round. These candles burn and consume themselves, while the flowers

exhale their perfume and spend their frail lives before the Blessed Sacrament, as a silent prayer before Him from whom they have their being; such sweet prayer cannot fail to bring a blessing on those who gave them in His name.

The *O salutaris* is part of a hymn written by the angelic Doctor, Saint Thomas of Aquin, in the thirteenth century, it is addressed directly to the Blessed Sacrament:

“O saving Victim, opening wide  
The gate of Heaven to man below,  
Our foes press on from every side,  
Thine aid supply, thy strength bestow.”

The opening words appropriately begin the service, as the priest opens the door of the Tabernacle, to take therefrom the Sacred Host and place It in the Monstrance. This the priest then places on the Throne above the Tabernacle in full view of the assembled Faithful. When Our Lord is thus enthroned, we pay homage to Him as our God, our King and loving Saviour. He holds, as it were, a royal reception, and we are privileged to be presented at His Court. The first act of homage is the offering of incense which, with triple swing of the thurible, the priest presents to Him from the steps of the Altar.

The use of Incense in divine service is very ancient. From God Himself Moses received particular instructions (Exodus 30:1) to build an Altar in the Tabernacle, whereon to burn incense, as an emblem of prayer ascending to God from the hearts of men. The early Christians followed the example of the Jews, and used incense at the celebration of their Liturgy, as is done to this day during solemn High Mass. This rite is one of the most conspicuous in the Catholic Church, for the offering of incense has ever been figurative both of personal reverence and of religious homage. We know how



the Magi presented their new-born Saviour with “gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2:11). And from history we learn that kings and emperors have furnished gold and silver thuribles to the Church for the burning of incense at the Altar.

This use of incense indicates that the place is holy and consecrated to the worship of God, to whom alone incense is offered. The fragrance of the burning spices is typical of the good odour of Jesus Christ, which should exhale from the souls of all who come into His presence. Then, incense has invariably been regarded as a beautiful figure of the prayer of the sincere Christian, and appropriately so; for the cloud of incense cannot rise in the air until it first be enkindled, and the prayer of the heart cannot ascend to God unless the heart be inflamed with His love. The psalmist cries out: “Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight” (Psalm 140:2).

From these considerations, it should be clear how appropriate and becoming is the use of incense during Benediction, when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed before us, and how truly it testifies to our belief in the Real Presence, for to offer it to mere bread would be nothing less than idolatry.

When the *O salutaris* is finished, the Litany of Loreto usually follows. This has, in more recent times, come into vogue, in place of the former *Salve* or other anthem, though its history goes no further back than the sixteenth century. It is quite familiar to the practical Catholic, whether in Latin or in English.

From what has already been said it will appear that Benediction, in its origin, was essentially a devotion of the Laity, a popular service. What a pity then it is that so many

nowadays fail to attend it, seem to think it quite superfluous and of no account, content with the Mass of obligation in the morning; and with those that do come to it, it has so far lost its popular character, that very seldom do the Faithful take their part in the singing, which must accompany Benediction. Here, at any rate, there should be no difficulty in the Congregation joining in and taking their part in the service. The music is simple and easy, usually familiar to them, and should not therefore be left exclusively to the choir. Nothing is more beautiful and devotional, nothing more thrilling and soul-stirring than the hearty congregational singing so often heard in the churches in Germany, but, it must be confessed, too seldom in this country. Let each one, therefore, strive to take part in the Litany and other prayers sung at Benediction, the solemn rite that attracts non-Catholics to the church more than perhaps any other of her services.

After the verse and prayer that belong to the Litany, there follows next the *Tantum ergo*. This contains the last two verses of the *Pange, lingua*, another of Saint Thomas' beautiful hymns, in honour of the Blessed Sacrament.

"Down in adoration falling,  
Lo! the Sacred Host we hail;  
Lo! o'er ancient forms departing  
Newer rites of grace prevail,  
Faith for all defects supplying  
Where the feeble senses fail."

Suiting the action to the words, *veneremur cernui*, we bend down and adore the Blessed Sacrament before us. At the beginning of the second verse, the priest again puts incense into the thurible, and thrice offers it up as before. Then comes the versicle so familiar to our ears, *Panem de coelo*,

of which an explanation has already been given; this is followed by the response and the prayer.

When this is ended, the Veil is laid over the shoulders of the priest, who then goes up to the Altar and lowers the Blessed Sacrament from Its throne. In his hands, now covered out of reverence with the veil, he raises the Monstrance, and turning round with it blesses the adoring congregation, reminding us of Jesus blessing the little children of old!

As during the Elevation at Mass, so, while this blessing is being given, absolute silence seems more appropriate and more impressive than the sweetest music the organ can give forth, more impressive certainly than the music that is often heard!

When the Monstrance is placed again on the Altar, there follows in this country the saying or chanting of the Divine Praises, " Blessed be God," etc., by which an indulgence of two years may be gained. The object of these ejaculations is to make reparation for the irreverences of every kind that are committed by wicked men against God and Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of love, against His Holy Mother and the Saints. Such reparation is nowadays more than ever needed; let us join very heartily in saying them, and meanwhile gain an indulgence that can bring relief to the suffering souls in Purgatory.

The priest then replaces the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle, the sacred rite is ended, the public reception is over, the audience closed. We sing the *Adoremus*, "Let us for ever adore the most holy Sacrament." "O praise the Lord, all ye nations, praise Him, all ye people" (Psalm 114). "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

Thus ends the beautiful and popular service of Benediction, the usual feature of our Sunday evening devotions. And when we leave, each one going to his own home, the sweet influence of this blessing of Jesus is upon us, and goes with us, like the fragrant perfume of incense that hung about His throne. If we have been remiss in the past, let us try to realize all this, and resolve not to miss such a grace in the future, but make the most of so precious an opportunity.

## Conclusion

The end has now been reached of these *Simple Instructions* on the great mystery of the Christian Religion, the most holy Eucharist. If the reader will just again look over the *Contents*, he will see the ground we have covered, and perhaps be able to get a general bird's eye view of the entire subject. It has naturally fallen into two great divisions, inasmuch as this Divine mystery instituted by Our Lord is both Sacrament and Sacrifice, each differing from the other in many respects, and therefore needing separate treatment. The chief points under each have been considered, and it is hoped that real instruction has been provided for such as need it. If what has been said in a simple and humble way be taken to heart and dwelt upon, an increase of love towards the Blessed Sacrament should be the result; this love will manifest itself in many practical forms, but especially by more frequent attendance at the Holy Sacrifice and more fervent reception of Holy Communion. This will help to bring back, in these our days of coldness and indifference, the practice of the early ages of faith, which the Church so earnestly longs to see adopted once again by her children.

# About This EBook

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The cover image is a photograph of a monstrance, candles and the Eucharist used in a Eucharistic Adoration at the Cathedral of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Reno, Nevada. It was photographed on 19 October 2017 by TrappistMonkStuff, and the image was swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

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